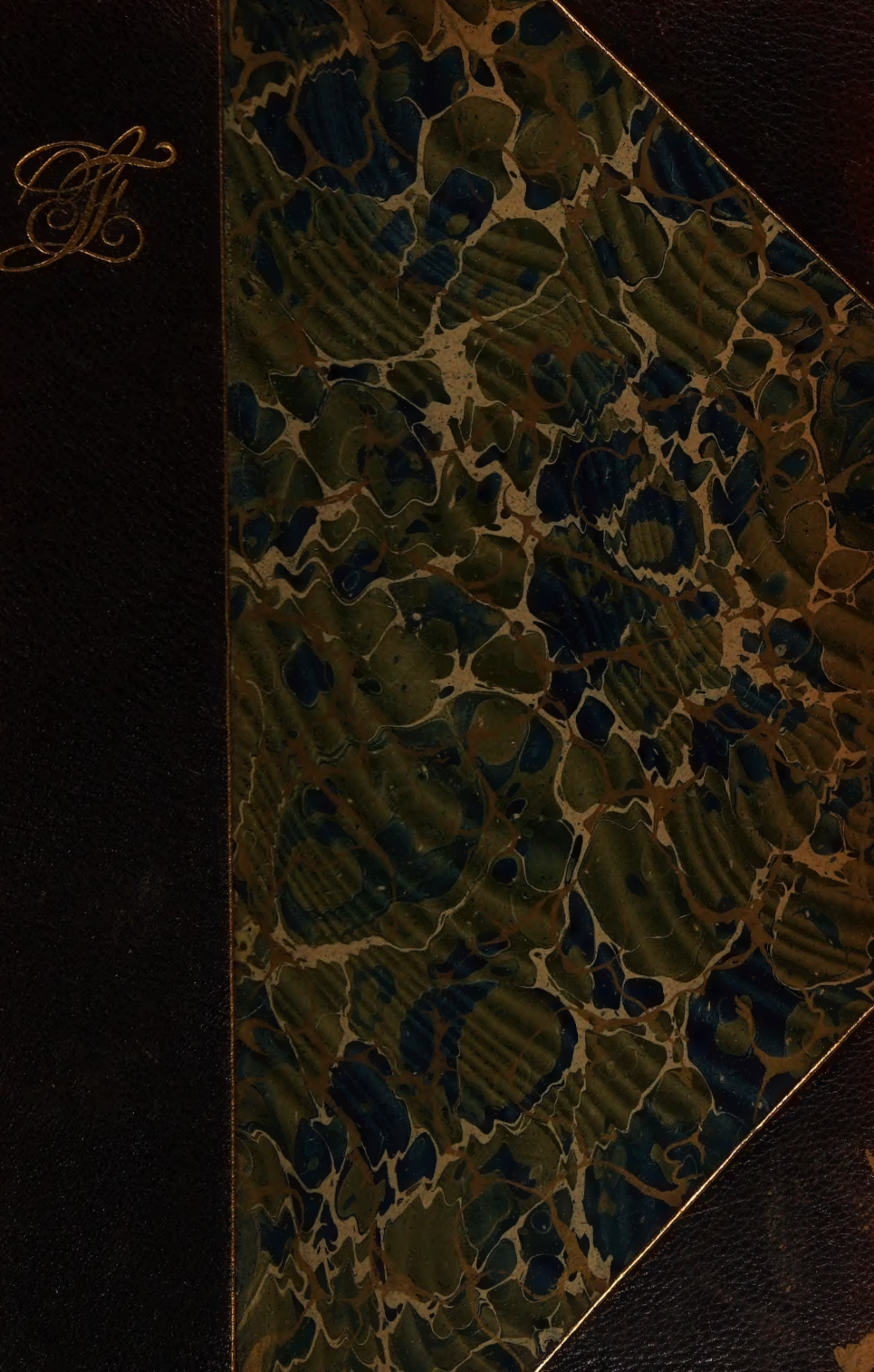

Honoré de Balzac

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

The Human Comedy

PHILOSOPHIC AND ANALYTIC STUDIES

VOLUME III

THIS EDITION OF THE COMPLETE TRANSLATION

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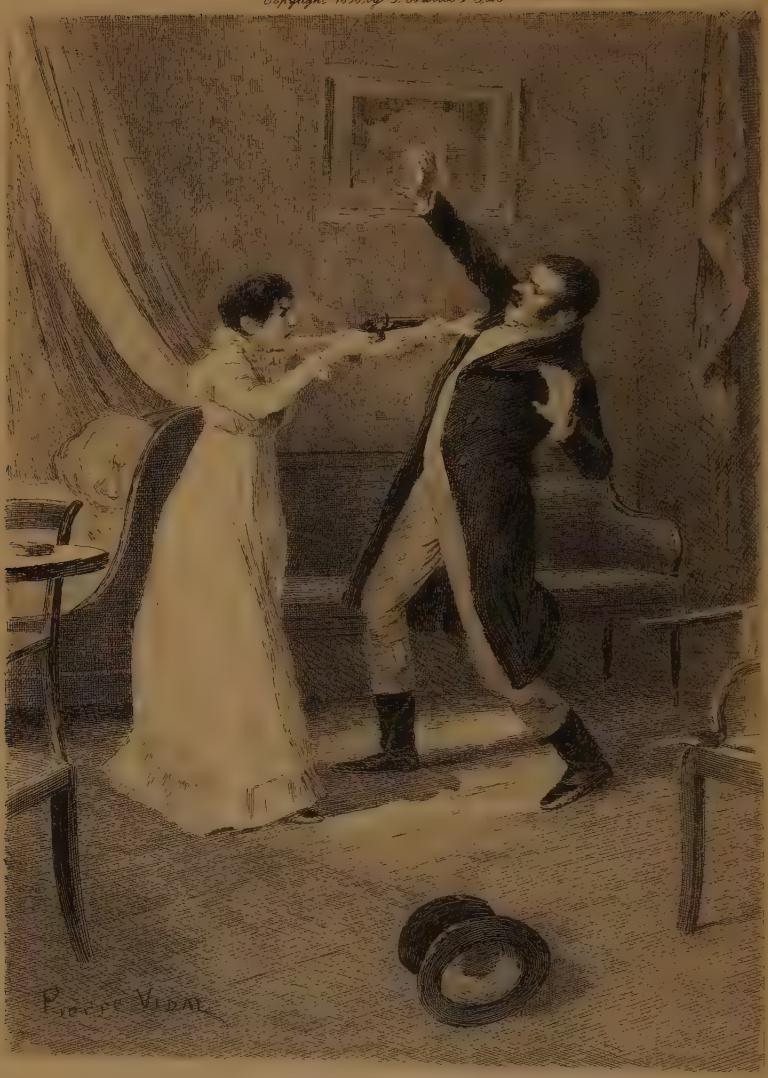

THE DEATH OF DIARD

"Is there need of such haste, Juana?—I would like to kiss you—"

The gendarmes were coming upstairs. Thereupon Juana took the pistol, covered Diard with it, held him firmly by the throat despite his shrieks, shot him through the head, and threw the weapon on the floor.

THE NOVELS

OF

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME
COMPLETELY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

THE UNKNOWN MASTERPIECE
THE MARANAS
A SEASHORE DRAMA
THE RED INN
MASTER CORNELIUS

BY G. BURNHAM IVES

WITH FIVE ETCHINGS BY EUGÈNE DECISY, AFTER
PAINTINGS BY PIERRE VIDAL

IN ONE VOLUME

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THE UNKNOWN MASTERPIECE

TO A LORD

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

1845.

I

GILLETTE

In the last days of the year 1612, on a cold December morning, a young man, whose clothing seemed very thin, was promenading before the door of a house on Rue des Grands-Augustins, Paris. After walking back and forth for a long while with the irresolution of a lover who dares not call upon his first mistress, however kind she may be, he at last crossed the threshold and inquired if Maître François Porbus were at home. Upon receiving a reply in the affirmative from an old woman who was sweeping one of the lower rooms, the young man slowly ascended the stairs, pausing from step to step like a courtier of recent date, anxious concerning the reception he may meet with at the king's hands. When he reached the top of the winding stairway, he stood for a moment on the landing, uncertain whether he should lift the fantastic knocker that embellished the door of the studio in which Henri IV.'s painter, abandoned by Marie de Médicis for Rubens, was in all probability at work. The young man felt the profound emotion which must cause the

heart of every great artist to beat fast, when, in the flower of youth and of his love for art, he enters the presence of a man of genius or of a masterpiece. There exists in all human sensations a primitive flower, engendered by a noble enthusiasm which grows constantly weaker and weaker until happiness has become naught but a memory and glory a lie. Among these frail passions, there is none that so closely resembles love as the youthful passion of an artist beginning to undergo the blissful torture of his destiny of glory and disaster—a passion overflowing with audacity and modesty, with vague beliefs and certain discouragement. The man who, with slender purse and genius that is budding, has not trembled with emotion upon presenting himself before a master, will always lack a chord in his heart, an indefinable touch of the brush, true feeling in his work, a certain poetry of expression. If some braggarts, puffed up with their own conceit, begin too soon to believe in their future, they are wise men in the judgment of none but fools. Upon that theory, the unknown youth seemed to possess genuine talent, if talent is to be measured by this initial timidity, this indefinable modesty which those who are destined to achieve renown are likely to lose in the exercise of their professions, as a pretty woman loses hers in the devious paths of coquetry. Familiarity with triumph lessens doubt, and modesty may perhaps be called a doubt.

Crushed by poverty and surprised at that moment by his own presumption, the poor neophyte would

not have entered the studio of the painter to whom we owe the admirable portrait of Henry IV., had not chance sent him an extraordinary re-enforcement. An old man ascended the staircase. By the peculiarities of his costume, the magnificence of his lace ruff, the ponderous self-assurance of his tread, the young man divined that the new-comer was either the patron or the friend of the painter; he stepped back on the landing to make room for him, and examined him with interest, hoping to recognize in him the good nature of the artist or the obliging disposition of those who love the arts; but it seemed to him that there was a diabolical cast to the face, and that indefinable something that makes an artist's mouth water. Imagine a bald, protruding, prominent brow, overhanging a little, flat nose, turned up at the end like Rabelais's or Socrates's; a smiling, wrinkled mouth, a short chin held jauntily aloft, and embellished with a gray beard trimmed to a point, sea-green eyes which were apparently dimmed by age, but which, in a paroxysm of anger or enthusiasm, were capable of magnetic flashes in striking contrast to the mother-of-pearl sea in which the pupils floated. The face was strangely seamed, too, by the exhaustion of old age, and even more by the thoughts that undermine body and mind alike. The eyes had no lashes, and one could barely detect a trace of eyebrows above their jutting arches. Place that head upon a slender, fragile body, surround it with lace of dazzling whiteness and of a pattern as intricate as that of a silver fish-slice, throw a heavy

gold chain over the old man's black doublet, and you will have a feeble idea of the personage to whom the dim light of the stairway imparted an even more fantastic appearance. You would have said that it was one of Rembrandt's canvases, without a frame, walking silently through the dark atmosphere which that great painter made his own. The old man cast a knowing glance at his junior, knocked three times at the door, and said to a sickly-looking man of about forty, who opened it:

"Good-morning, master."

Porbus bowed respectfully; he admitted the young man, thinking that he had come with the other, and was the less disturbed by his presence because the neophyte could not shake off the spell cast upon born painters by the aspect of the first studio they see, in which some of the material processes of art are disclosed to them. A skylight in the roof lighted Master Porbus's studio. Concentrated upon a canvas which stood on the easel, and which bore only three or four light strokes as yet, the daylight did not reach the black depths of the corners of that vast room; but a few stray gleams lighted up the silvery eye in the centre of a reiter's cuirass hanging on the wall in the ruddy shadow, streaked with a sudden furrow of light the carved and waxed cornice of an old-fashioned dresser laden with curious vessels, or studded with bright specks the rough surface of divers old, gold brocade curtains with heavy, irregular folds, which lay about here and there as patterns. Plaster manikins, trunks and

limbs of antique goddesses, lovingly polished by the kisses of centuries, were strewn over shelves and consoles. Innumerable sketches, studies in three colors, in red lead or pen and ink, covered the walls to the ceiling. Boxes of paints, bottles of oil and essences, and overturned stools left only a narrow passage to the circle of light projected by the high stained-glass skylight, whose rays fell full upon Porbus's pale face and the ivory skull of the strange old man. The young man's attention was soon directed exclusively upon a picture which had already become famous in those days of turmoil and revolution, and which was visited by some of those self-willed individuals to whom we owe the keeping alive of the sacred fire in evil days. The lovely canvas represented *Marie the Egyptian* preparing to pay the boatman. That masterpiece, painted for Marie de Médicis, was sold by her in her days of poverty.

"I like your saint," said the old man to Porbus, "and I would pay you ten gold crowns over and above the price the queen gives you; but to enter into competition with her—the devil!"

"Do you think well of it?"

"Hm!" exclaimed the old man, "do I think well of it?—yes and no. Your good woman is not badly put together, but she is not alive. You artists think that you have done all that is necessary when you have drawn a figure correctly, and put everything in its place according to the laws of anatomy! You color the features with a flesh tone mixed beforehand on your palette, taking care to keep one side

darker than the other, and because you glance from time to time at a naked woman standing on the table, you think that you have copied nature, you fancy that you are painters and have stolen God's secret! P-r-r-r! In order to be a great poet, it is not enough to know syntax thoroughly, and to make no mistakes in grammar! Look at your saint, Porbus! At first glance, she seems admirable; but when you look again, you see that she is glued to the canvas, and that you cannot walk around her. She is a silhouette with a single face, a cut out figure, an image which cannot turn or change its position. I feel no air blowing between that arm and the background of the picture; space and depth are lacking; and yet the perspective is perfect, and the gradation of colors in the sky is excellently done; but, notwithstanding your praiseworthy efforts, I could never believe that that lovely body was animated by the warm breath of life. It seems to me that, if I should place my hand upon that firm, round throat, I should find it as cold as marble! No, my friend, the blood is not flowing beneath that ivory skin, life does not inflate with its purple dew the veins and arteries entwined in an inextricable network beneath the transparent amber-hued skin of the temples and the breast. In this place, there is palpitating life, but that other is motionless, life and death contend together in each detail: here it is a woman, there a statue, and there a corpse. Your creation is incomplete. You have succeeded in breathing only a portion of your soul into your cherished work. The

torch of Prometheus has gone out more than once in your hands, and many portions of your picture have not been touched by the heavenly flame."

"But why do you say so, my dear master?" said Porbus, respectfully, to the old man, while the younger with difficulty restrained a powerful impulse to strike him.

"Ah! there you are," replied the little old man. "You have wavered uncertainly between two systems, between drawing and coloring, between the painstaking phlegm, the stiff precision, of the old German masters, and the dazzling ardor, the happy fertility, of the Italian painters. You have tried to imitate at one and the same time Hans Holbein and Titian, Albert Dürer and Paul Veronese. Surely that was a superb ambition! But what has been the result? You have achieved neither the severe charm of sharpness of outline, nor the deceitful fascination of the chiaro-oscuro. In that spot, like bronze in a state of fusion bursting its too fragile mould, the rich, light coloring of the Titian has overflowed the meagre Albert Dürer outline in which you cast it. Elsewhere, the features have resisted and held in check the magnificent outpouring of the Venetian palette. Your face is neither perfectly drawn nor perfectly painted, and bears everywhere the traces of this unfortunate indecision. If you did not feel that you were strong enough to melt together in the fire of your genius the two rival methods, you should have chosen definitely one or the other, in order to obtain the unity which corresponds with one of the

essential conditions of life. You are true only in the middle portions, your outlines are false, they do not overlap one another, and do not look as if there were anything behind. There is truth here," said the old man, pointing to the saint's breast; "and here," he continued, indicating the point on the canvas where the shoulder came to an end. "But here," he exclaimed, returning to the middle of the throat, "all is false. Let us not analyze it, it would drive you to despair."

The old man seated himself on a stool, hid his face in his hands, and was silent.

"And yet, master," said Porbus, "I studied that throat with great care in the model; but, unhappily for us, there are genuine effects in nature which do not seem probable on canvas—"

"The mission of art is not to copy nature, but to give expression to it! You are not a base copyist, but a poet!" cried the old man, earnestly, interrupting Porbus with an imperious gesture. "Otherwise, a sculptor would end all his labors in merely moulding women. But try to mould your mistress's hand and place it before you; you will find a horrible dead thing without any resemblance, and you will be compelled to have recourse to the chisel of the man who, without copying it for you exactly, will instil movement and life into it. We have to grasp the spirit, the soul, the features, of things and beings. Effects! effects! why, they are the accidents of life, and not life itself. A hand—as I have taken that example—a hand is not simply

a part of the body, it expresses and continues a thought which we must grasp and render. Neither the poet nor the painter nor the sculptor should separate cause and effect, which are inextricably bound up in each other! There is the real struggle! Many painters triumph instinctively, knowing nothing of this canon of art. You draw a woman, but you do not see her! Not thus do we succeed in forcing nature to yield up her secrets. Your hand reproduces, unconsciously on your part, the model you have copied in your master's studio. You do not go down far enough into the intimate knowledge of form, you do not pursue it with sufficient love and perseverance in its windings and its flights. Beauty is a stern, uncompromising thing, which does not allow itself to be attained in that way; you must bide its time, keep watch upon it, press it close, and hold it fast to force it to surrender. Form is a Proteus much more difficult to seize, and much more prolific in changes of aspect than the fabled Proteus; only after a long contest can one force it to show itself in its real shape. You are content with the first view that it presents to you, or with the second or the third, at all events: but that is not the way that victorious fighters act! The unvanquished painters never allow themselves to be deceived by all these will-o'-the-wisps, they persevere until nature is driven to show itself to them all naked and in its true guise. Such was the course pursued by Raphael," said the old man, removing his black velvet cap to express the respect

inspired in him by the king of art: "his great superiority is due to the instinctive sense which, in him, seems to desire to shatter form. Form is, in his figures, what it is in ourselves, an interpreter for the communication of ideas and sensations, an exhaustless source of poetic inspiration. Every figure is a world in itself, a portrait of which the original appeared in a sublime vision, in a flood of light, pointed to by an inward voice, laid bare by a divine finger which showed what the sources of expression had been in the whole past life of the subject. You give your women fine dresses of flesh, lovely draperies of hair, but where is the blood that engenders tranquillity or passion, and causes its peculiar effects? Your saint was a brunette, but this one, my poor Porbus, is more nearly a blonde! Your people, therefore, are pale, colored phantoms which you parade before our eyes, and you call that painting and art! Because you have produced something which resembles a woman more than a house, you think that you have gained your end, and, proud beyond measure because you are no longer obliged to write beneath your figures: *currus venustus* or *pulcher homo*, as did the early painters, you fancy that you are wonderful artists! Aha! not yet, my excellent friends! you must wear out many brushes, cover many canvases, before you reach that stage! Assuredly a woman carries her head in that way, she holds her skirt so, her eyes have that languishing, melting expression of gentle resignation, the fluttering shadow of the eyelashes wavers so upon her cheeks! It is true

and it is not true. What does it lack? a mere nothing, but that nothing is everything. You produce the appearance of life, but you do not express its overflowing vitality, that indefinable something which is the soul, perhaps, and which floats mistily upon the surface,—in a word, that flower of life that Titian and Raphael grasped. Starting from the last point you have reached, excellent results in painting might perhaps be attained, but you grow weary too quickly. The vulgar herd admires, and the true connoisseur smiles. O Mabuse, O my master," added this extraordinary individual, "you are a thief, you carried life away with you!—However," he continued, "this canvas is preferable to the paintings of that varlet Rubens, with his mountains of Flemish flesh sprinkled with vermilion, his waves of red hair and his medley of colors. At all events, you have harmonious coloring there, and accurate drawing, and sentiment, the three essential elements of art."

"Why, that saint is sublime, goodman!" cried the young man, in a loud voice, rousing himself from a profound reverie. "The two figures of the saint and the boatman have a subtlety of expression unknown to the Italian painters; I do not know of one who could have represented with such art the boatman's indecision."

"Is this little knave with you?" Porbus asked the old man.

"Alas! master, pray pardon my presumption," replied the neophyte, blushing hotly. "I am unknown, a dauber of canvases by instinct, and only

lately arrived in this city, the fountain of all knowledge."

"To work!" said Porbus, handing him a red pencil and a sheet of paper.

The unknown rapidly copied the *Marie* almost at a stroke.

"Oho!" cried the old man. "Your name?"

The youth wrote below the sketch: "Nicolas Poussin."

"That is not bad for a beginner," said the strange personage who harangued so wildly. "I see that we can talk painting before you. I do not blame you for admiring Porbus's saint. It is a masterpiece in the eyes of the world, and only those who are admitted to the deepest secrets of art can discover wherein it sins. But, since you are deserving of the lesson and are capable of understanding it, I am going to show you how little is needed to complete the work. Be all eyes and all attention, for such an opportunity to learn may never be offered you again.—Porbus, your palette!"

Porbus produced palette and brushes. The little old man turned up his sleeves with a quick, convulsive movement, passed his thumb through the palette, daubed and covered with colors, which Porbus handed to him; he snatched rather than took from his hands a handful of brushes of all sizes, and his pointed beard twitched sharply with the restless efforts that betrayed the passionate concupiscence of an amorous imagination. As he dipped his brush in the paint, he muttered between his teeth:

"These colors are good for nothing but to be thrown out of the window with the man who made them; they are disgustingly crude and false! How can one paint with such stuff?"

Then, with feverish animation, he dipped the end of the brush in the different mounds of color, sometimes running over the whole assortment more rapidly than a cathedral organist runs his fingers over his whole keyboard in the *O Filii* at Easter.

Porbus and Poussin stood like statues beside the canvas, absorbed in the most intense contemplation.

"You see, young man," said the old man, without turning his head, "you see how, with three or four strokes and a touch of bluish varnish, we can make the air circulate around the head of the poor saint, who must have felt as if she were stifling and unable to move in that dense atmosphere! See how the drapery flutters now, and how readily you understand that the breeze is raising it! It seemed before like starched cloth held up by pins. Do you see how well the satiny polish I have given the breast represents the smooth softness of a young girl's skin, and how the mixture of red-brown and burnt ochre warms up the gray coldness of that place in the shadow where the blood formed in clots instead of flowing? Young man, young man, no master could teach you what I am showing you now. Mabuse alone possessed the secret of imparting life to figures. Mabuse had but one pupil, myself. I have had none, and I am an old man! You have enough intelligence to divine the rest from the glimpse I give you."

As he talked, the singular old man touched all the different parts of the picture: here two strokes of the brush, there a single one, but always so aptly, that the result was almost a new painting, but a painting dipped in light. He worked with such passionate ardor that the perspiration stood on his bald head; all his motions were so impatient and abrupt, that it seemed to young Poussin that there must be a devil in his body, acting through his hands and forcing them to perform all sorts of fantastic antics against the man's will. The supernatural brilliancy of his eyes, the convulsive movements which seemed to be the effect of resistance to something, gave to that idea a semblance of truth well calculated to act upon a youthful imagination. He worked on, saying:

"Paf! paf! paf! this is the way we do it, young man!—Come, my little strokes, come and brighten up this frigid tone for me! Well, well! Pon! pon! pon!" he continued, giving a warm tone to the parts in which he had pointed out a lack of life, making differences of temperament disappear beneath a few daubs of color and producing the requisite unity of tone to depict a hot-blooded Egyptian.—"You see, my boy, it's only the last stroke of the brush that counts. Porbus has made hundreds, I add but one. No one gives us any credit for what is underneath. Understand that!"

At last, the demon paused, and said, turning to Porbus and Poussin, who were struck dumb with admiration:

"That is not equal to my *Belle Noiseuse* yet; however, a man could afford to put his name at the bottom of such a work. Yes, I would sign it," he added, rising to get a mirror in which he looked at it.—"Now, let us go to breakfast," he said. "Come to my house, both of you. I have some smoked ham and some good wine!—Yes! yes! bad as the times are, we will talk painting! We are strong men.—Here is a little fellow," he added, laying his hand on Nicolas Poussin's shoulder, "who has facility of execution."

Noticing the Norman's shabby cap, he drew a leather purse from his girdle, took two gold pieces from it, and said, as he handed them to him:

"I will buy your sketch."

"Take them," said Porbus to Poussin, seeing that he started and blushed with shame, for the young adept had a poor man's pride. "Take them, he has the ransom of two kings in his wallet!"

All three left the studio, and walked along together, conversing upon art, until they reached a fine wooden house near Pont Saint-Michel, the decorations of which, the carvings around the windows, the arabesques and the knocker, filled Poussin with admiration. The would-be painter suddenly found himself in a room on the ground-floor, in front of a rousing fire, beside a table laden with appetizing dishes, and, by incredible good-fortune, in the company of two great artists overflowing with good-humor.

"Young man," said Porbus, noticing that he was gazing in rapt admiration at a picture, "do not look

too closely at that canvas, or it will drive you to despair."

It was the *Adam* which Mabuse painted to obtain his release from the prison in which his creditors kept him for so long a time. The face was so strikingly lifelike, that Nicolas Poussin began at that moment to understand the real meaning of the old man's confused words. The latter glanced at the picture with a gratified air, but without enthusiasm, as if to say: "I have done better!"

"There is life there," he said, "my poor master surpassed himself; but still there is a lack of truth in the background of the picture. The man is thoroughly alive, he rises and seems to walk toward us. But the air, the sky, the wind, which we breathe and see and feel, are not there. Again, there is nothing there but a man! Now, the only man who ever came forth directly from the hands of God should have a something divine, which is lacking in that picture. Mabuse himself said so with vexation, when he was not drunk."

Poussin looked from the old man to Porbus with restless curiosity. He walked toward the latter as if to ask him their host's name; but the painter put his finger to his lips with a mysterious air, and the young man, intensely interested, held his peace, hoping that some word would fall, sooner or later, which would enable him to discover the name of his host, whose wealth and talent were sufficiently attested by the respectful demeanor of Porbus, and by the treasures heaped up in that room.

Poussin, spying a magnificent portrait of a woman on the dark oak wainscoting, cried out:

"What a beautiful Giorgione!"

"No," replied the old man, "that is one of my earliest daubs."

"*Tudieu!* then I must be in the presence of the god of painting!" exclaimed Poussin, artlessly.

The old man smiled like one long accustomed to such praise.

"Master Frenhofer!" said Porbus, "could you not order a drop of your good Rhenish wine for me?"

"Two pipes!" replied the old man. "One to pay for the pleasure I enjoyed this morning of seeing your lovely sinner, and the other as a friendly gift."

"Ah! if I were not always ill," said Porbus, "and if you would let me see your *Belle Noiseuse*, I might paint a broad, high, deep picture with life-size figures."

"Show my work!" exclaimed the old man, excitedly. "No, no! I have still to put some finishing touches to it. Yesterday, toward evening, I thought that it was done. The eyes seemed moist to me, the flesh rose and fell. The locks of hair moved. It breathed! Although I have found a way to represent upon a flat canvas the relief and rounded forms of nature, this morning, by daylight, I realized my error. Ah! to attain that glorious result, I studied with the utmost care the great masters of coloring, I analyzed and dissected, layer by layer, the pictures of Titian, that king of light; like that monarch of

painters, I sketched my figure in a light tone with soft, thick color,—for shadow is only an incident, remember that, my boy!—Then I returned to my work, and, by means of half-tones and varnish, making the latter less and less transparent, I made the shadow more and more pronounced, even to the deepest black; for the shadows of ordinary painters are of a different nature from their light tones; they are wood, brass, whatever you choose, except flesh in shadow. You feel that, if their figures should change their positions, the shaded places would not brighten and become light. I have avoided that fault, into which many of the most illustrious painters have fallen, and in my work the light can be felt under the opacity of the deepest shade! I have not, like a multitude of ignorant fools who imagine that they draw correctly because they make a sharp, smooth stroke, marked the outlines of my figure with absolute exactness, and brought out in relief every trifling anatomical detail, for the human body is not bounded by lines. In that respect, sculptors can approach reality more nearly than we painters. Nature provides a succession of rounded outlines which run into one another. Strictly speaking, drawing does not exist!—Do not laugh, young man! Strange as that statement may appear, you will some day realize its justice.—The line is the method by which man expresses the effect of light upon objects; but there are no lines in nature, where everything is rounded; it is in modelling that one draws, that is to say, one takes things away from

their surroundings; the distribution of light alone gives a lifelike appearance to the body! Wherefore, I have not sharply defined the features, I have enveloped the outlines in a cloud of warm, half-light tones which make it impossible to place your finger on the precise spot where the outline ends and the background begins. Near at hand, the work looks downy and seems to lack precision; but at a distance of two yards it all becomes distinct and stands boldly forth; the body turns, the shape becomes prominent, you can feel the air circulating all about. But I am not content as yet, I have my doubts. It may be that we ought not to draw a single line, perhaps it would be better to attack a figure in the middle, giving one's attention first to the parts that stand out most prominently in the light, and to pass thence to the darker portions. Is not such the method of the sun, the divine painter of the universe? O Nature, Nature! who has ever followed thee in thy flight? Observe that too much knowledge, like ignorance, leads to a negation. I doubt my own work!"

The old man paused, then continued:

"Young man, for ten years I have been at work; but what are ten short years when one is struggling with nature? We know not how much time Seigneur Pygmalion consumed in making the only statue that ever walked!"

The old man fell into a profound reverie, and sat with staring eyes, playing mechanically with his knife.

"He is conversing with his *spirit!*" said Porbus in an undertone.

At that word, Nicolas Poussin was conscious of the pressure of an inexplicable artist's curiosity. That white-eyed old fellow, alert, yet torpid, had become something more than a man to him, and assumed the proportions of a supernatural genius, living in an unknown sphere. He aroused a thousand confused ideas in his mind. The moral phenomenon of that species of fascination can no more be defined than you can translate the emotion aroused by a song that recalls his fatherland to the exile's heart. The contempt that the old man affected to feel for the most beautiful examples of art, his wealth, his manners, Porbus's deference to him, this work of his so long kept secret, a work of untiring patience, doubtless, and of genius, if one might judge from the head of the *Virgin*, which young Poussin had so frankly admired, and which, beautiful even beside Mabuse's *Adam*, attested the imperial workmanship of one of the princes of art—everything about the old man went beyond the bounds of human nature. The one point that was clearly perceptible to Nicolas Poussin, as he contemplated that supernatural being, was a complete image of the artist's nature, of that riotous nature to which so many powers are entrusted, and which too often misuses them, leading cold reason, and bourgeois intellects, and even some connoisseurs, through innumerable stony paths where, to their apprehension, there is nothing; whereas, the white-winged maiden, in her sportive fantasy, discovers

epics there, and castles, and works of art. A mocking, yet kindly nature, fruitful, yet barren! Thus, to the enthusiastic Poussin, the old man had become, by a sudden transformation, the personification of art, art with its secrets, its impulses, its reveries.

"Yes, my dear Porbus," continued Frenhofer, "thus far I have never fallen in with an absolutely perfect woman, a body whose contours are flawlessly beautiful, and whose coloring—But where is she to be found in life," he said, interrupting himself, "that undiscoverable Venus of the ancients, so often sought, some of whose charms we find now and then scattered among different persons? Oh! to see for a moment, for a single time, divine, complete, ideal nature, I would give my whole fortune. Aye, to the abode of the departed I would go to seek thee, O celestial beauty! Like Orpheus, I would go down into the hell of art, to bring back life therefrom."

"We may go now," said Porbus to Poussin; "he no longer hears us or sees us!"

"Let us go to his studio," suggested the wondering youth.

"Oh! the old fox allows no one to enter. His treasures are too well guarded for us to obtain a glance at them. I have not awaited your suggestion and your whim before making an assault upon the mystery."

"There is a mystery, then?"

"Yes," Porbus replied. "Old Frenhofer is the only pupil Mabuse ever taught. Having become his friend, his savior, his father, Frenhofer sacrificed

the greater part of his treasures to gratify Mabuse's passions; in exchange, Mabuse bequeathed to him the secret of *relief*, the power of imparting to figures that extraordinary life, that flower of nature, which is our never-ending despair, but of which he was such a perfect master that, one day, when he had sold and drunk the flowered damask he was to wear on the occasion of the reception of Charles V., he attended his master in a paper costume painted in imitation of damask. The peculiar splendor of the stuff worn by Mabuse surprised the Emperor, who, upon undertaking to compliment the old drunkard's patron, discovered the fraud. Frenhofer is a man passionately devoted to our art, who looks higher and further than other painters. He has meditated deeply on coloring, on the absolute accuracy of the line; but he has investigated so much that he has at last reached the point of doubting the very object of his investigations. In his moments of despair he insists that there is no such thing as drawing, and that only geometrical figures can be made with lines; that goes beyond the truth, for a figure can be made with lines and with black, which is not a color; which tends to prove that our art is, like nature, composed of an infinitude of elements: drawing gives us a skeleton, color is life, but life without the skeleton is less complete than a skeleton without life. In fine, there is something truer than all of this; namely, that practice and observation are everything to a painter, and that, if rhetoric and poetry quarrel with the brush, we reach the doubting stage like

the goodman here, who is as much a madman as a painter. Sublime painter that he is, he was unfortunate enough to be born rich, which has made it possible for him to go astray; do not imitate him! Work! painters ought to meditate only with brush in hand."

"We will find our way!" cried Poussin, no longer listening to Porbus, and fearing nothing.

Porbus smiled at the young stranger's enthusiasm and left him, after inviting him to repeat his visit.

Nicolas Poussin returned slowly toward Rue de la Harpe, and passed, without noticing it, the modest hostelry at which he lodged. Ascending the wretched staircase with anxious speed, he reached at last a room on the upper floor beneath a roof with columnar supports, whose interstices were closed with plaster, a simple and airy style of architecture common in the houses of old Paris. Beside the single grimy window of the room sat a young girl, who sprang to her feet with a loving impulse as she heard the painter's hand upon the door, recognizing him by his touch upon the knob.

"What is the matter?" she said.

"Why—why—" he cried, choking with pleasure, "why, I have a feeling that I am a painter! I had always doubted myself hitherto, but this morning I believe in myself! I may be a great man! I tell you, Gillette, we shall be rich and happy! There is gold in these brushes—"

But suddenly he held his peace. His grave, strong face lost its joyous light when he compared

the vastness of his hopes with the paucity of his resources. The walls were covered with bits of paper on which were sketches in pencil. He did not own four clean canvases. Colors were expensive in those days, and the poor fellow saw that his palette was almost bare. Amid all that destitution, he possessed and was conscious of boundless wealth of heart and a superabundance of consuming genius. Brought to Paris by a nobleman who was a friend of his family, or perhaps by his own talent, he had suddenly fallen in with a mistress there, one of those noble and generous souls whose destiny it often is to suffer beside a great man, espousing his cares and struggling to understand his caprices; strong to endure poverty and love, as others are bold to carry the burden of luxury and to parade their lack of feeling. The smile playing about Gillette's lips illumined that garret and rivalled the sky in brilliancy. The sun was not always shining, while she was always at hand, absorbed in her passion, clinging to her happiness and her suffering, comforting the genius that overflowed in love before seizing upon art.

"Come, Gillette, and listen."

The glad-hearted girl obediently jumped upon the painter's knee. She was all grace, all beauty, pretty as the springtime, arrayed in all womanly charms, and brightening them with the flame of a lovely soul.

"Oh! God," he cried, "I shall never dare to tell her."

"A secret?" she rejoined; "I insist upon knowing it."

Poussin was lost in thought.

"Speak, I beg you."

"Gillette—poor, beloved heart!—"

"Oho! do you want something of me?"

"Yes."

"If you want me to pose for you again as I did the other day," she rejoined, with a little pout, "I will never consent, for at those times your eyes no longer say aught to me. You no longer think of me, and still you look at me."

"Would you prefer to see me copying another woman?"

"Perhaps," said she, "if she were very ugly."

"But," continued Poussin, in a serious tone, "suppose that, in the interest of my future renown, to help to make me a great painter, it were necessary for you to pose for another person?"

"You are trying to test me," she replied. "You know that I would not go."

Poussin let his head fall forward on his breast, like a man who succumbs to a joy or a sorrow that is too intense for his strength.

"Listen," said she, plucking at the sleeve of Poussin's threadbare doublet, "I have told you, Nick, that I would give my life for you; but I never promised you that I would renounce my love while I live."

"Renounce it?" cried the young artist.

"If I should exhibit myself so to another, you

would no longer love me; and I myself should consider myself unworthy of you. Is it not a natural and simple thing to obey your wishes? Do what I may, I am happy, aye, and proud, to do your dear will. But for another, nay, nay!"

"Forgive me, dear Gillette!" said the painter, throwing himself at her feet. "I prefer to be loved rather than to be glorious. To me, you are fairer than wealth or honors. Go, throw away my brushes, burn yonder sketches. I have gone astray. My true calling is to love you. I am no painter, I am a lover. A fig for art and all its secrets!"

She was overjoyed and charmed, she admired him! She was queen, she felt instinctively that the arts were forgotten for her, and cast at her feet as a grain of incense.

"And yet he is only an old man," continued Poussin. "He can see naught but the woman in you. You are so perfect!"

"One must love with all one's heart," she cried, ready to sacrifice the scruples of her love to reward her lover for all the sacrifices he was making for her. "But," she added, "it would be my ruin. Ah! to ruin myself for you—that would be very sweet! but you would forget me. Oh! how unfortunate it is that you had such a thought!"

"I did have it, and I love you," he said, with something like contrition; "but does that make me an infamous creature?"

"Let us consult Père Hardouin," she said.

"Oh! no; let it be a secret between us."

"Very well, I will go; but do not be in the room," she said. "Remain at the door, armed with your dagger. If I cry out, rush in, and kill the painter."

No longer conscious of aught but his art, Poussin folded Gillette in his arms.

"He does not love me now!" she thought, when she was alone.

She already repented of her resolution. But she soon fell a victim to a terror more painful than her repentance: she strove to banish a ghastly thought that crept into her mind. She fancied that she already loved the painter less, suspecting him of being less worthy of her esteem than she had believed.

II

CATHERINE LESCAULT

Three months after the first meeting of Poussin and Porbus, the latter called upon Master Frenhofer. The old man was at the time a prey to one of those spontaneous attacks of profound depression, the cause of which, if we are to believe medical mathematicians, is to be found in a sluggish digestion, in the wind, the heat, or some trouble in the hypochondriac region; and, according to the spiritualists, in the imperfection of our moral nature. The good man had simply worn himself out completing his mysterious picture. He was sitting languidly in a great chair of carved oak, upholstered in black leather; and, without laying aside his melancholy expression, he bestowed upon Porbus the glance of a man who had become reconciled to his *ennui*.

"Well, master," said Porbus, "was the ultramarine for which you sent to Bruges good for nothing? Have you not been able to pulverize your new white? Is your oil bad or are your brushes troublesome?"

"Alas!" cried the old man, "I thought for a moment that my work was finished; but I have certainly gone wrong in some details, and my mind will

not be at rest until I have cleared away my doubts. I have decided to travel, and visit Turkey, Greece, and Asia in search of models, in order to compare my picture with nature in different forms. It may be that I have Nature herself upstairs," he continued, with a contented smile. "Sometimes I am afraid that a breath may awaken that woman and that she will disappear."

Suddenly he rose, as if to go away.

"Stay!" said Porbus, "I have come in time to save you the expense and fatigue of the journey."

"How so?" demanded Frenhofer in amazement.

"Young Poussin is beloved by a woman whose incomparable beauty is absolutely free from imperfection. But, my dear master, if he consents to lend her to you, you must at least let us see your canvas."

The old man stood motionless, in a state of absolute bewilderment.

"What!" he sorrowfully exclaimed at last, "exhibit my creation, my spouse? tear aside the veil behind which I have modestly concealed my happiness? Why, that would be most shocking prostitution! For ten years past, I have lived with this woman, she is mine, mine alone; she loves me. Does she not smile at each stroke of the brush that I have given her? she has a soul, a soul with which I have endowed her. She would blush if other eyes than mine did but rest upon her. Exhibit her! where is the husband, the lover, so vile as to lead his wife to dishonor? When you paint a

picture for the court, you do not put your whole soul into it, you sell to courtiers naught but colored manikins. My painting is not a painting, it is a sentiment, a passion! Born in my studio, it must remain there in virgin purity, and cannot go thence except it be clothed. Poetry and women abandon themselves naked to none but their lovers! Do we possess Raphael's model, Ariosto's Angelica, Dante's Beatrice? No! we see only their figures. Mark this, that the work I have up yonder under lock is an exception in our art. It is not a canvas, it is a woman! a woman with whom I weep and laugh, and talk and think. Would you have me suddenly cast aside a joy of ten years' standing as one discards a cloak; would you have me suddenly cease to be a father, a lover, and a god? That woman is not a creature, she is a creation. Let your youth come: I will give him my treasures, I will give him Correggios, Michael Angelos, Titians, I will kiss his footprints in the dust; but make him my rival? shame upon me! Ah! I am more lover than painter even now. Yes, I shall have the courage to burn my *Belle Noiseuse* when I draw my last breath; but force her to endure the glance of another man, a young man, a painter? No, no! I would kill the man on the next day, who had sullied her with a glance. I would kill him on the spot, even you, my friend, if you did not salute her on your knees! Would you have me now subject my idol to the cold stare and the stupid criticism of fools? Ah! love is a mystery, it lives only in the lowest depths of the

heart, and all is lost when a man says, even to his friend: 'There is the woman I love!'"

The old man seemed to have become young again; his eyes sparkled with life; his pale cheeks were suffused with a bright red flush, and his hands shook. Porbus, amazed at the passionate violence with which these words were uttered, was at a loss for a fitting response to a sentiment as strange as it was intense. Was Frenhofer sane or mad? Was he under the spell of an artist's caprice, or were the ideas he expressed attributable to the strange fanaticism produced in us by the long and painful delivery of a great work? Could one hope ever to reach an understanding with that strange passion?

Revolving all these thoughts in his mind, Porbus said to the old man:

"But is it not woman for woman? does not Poussin subject his mistress to your gaze?"

"What mistress?" replied Frenhofer. "She will betray him sooner or later. Mine will always be true to me!"

"Very well," rejoined Porbus, "let us say no more about it. But you may die, leaving your work unfinished, before you find, even in Asia, a woman so lovely, so perfect, as the one of whom I speak."

"Oh! it is finished," said Frenhofer. "Whoever should see it would believe that he was looking at a woman lying on a bed of velvet with curtains about her. By her side is a golden tripod, giving forth perfume. You would be tempted to grasp the tassel

of the cord that holds back the curtains, and it would seem to you that you saw the bosom of Catherine Lescault, a famous courtesan called *La Belle Noiseuse*, actually rise and fall with her respiration. And yet I would like to be perfectly certain—"

"Go to Asia, then," suggested Porbus, detecting something like hesitation in Frenhofer's glance. And he took two or three steps toward the door of the room.

At that moment, Gillette and Nicolas Poussin reached the outer door of Frenhofer's house. As the girl was on the point of entering, she took her hand from the painter's arm and recoiled as if she were seized by a sudden presentiment.

"Why have I come here?" she asked her lover, in a deep voice, looking at him with staring eyes.

"Gillette, I left you free to do as you chose, and I wish to obey you in everything. You are my conscience and my glory. Return to the house; I shall be happier, perhaps, than if you—"

"Do I belong to myself when you speak so to me? Ah! no, I am no more than a child.—Come," she added, apparently making a mighty effort, "even if our love dies and I plant lifelong regret in my heart, will not your renown be the reward of my compliance with your wishes? Let us enter; it will be as if I still lived, if I remain a living memory on your palette."

As they opened the street door, the lovers found themselves face to face with Porbus, who, surprised by the loveliness of Gillette, whose eyes were full

of tears at the moment, seized the trembling girl's hand and led her to the old man.

"Look," said he, "is she not the equal of all the masterpieces on earth?"

Frenhofer started. Gillette stood before him in the simple, artless attitude of an innocent, shy young Georgian girl, kidnapped by brigands and brought before a slave-dealer. A blush of shame tinged her cheeks, she lowered her eyes, her hands hung at her sides, her strength seemed to desert her, and her tears protested against the outrage inflicted upon her modesty. At that moment, Poussin, in despair at having brought that lovely treasure forth from its garret, cursed himself. He became more lover than artist, and a thousand scruples wrung his heart when he saw the old man's eye flash with youthful fire as, in accordance with the custom of painters, he mentally disrobed the girl, so to speak, divining her most secret charms. Thereupon he reverted to the fierce jealousy of true love.

"Let us go, Gillette!" he cried.

At that cry, at that tone, his mistress joyfully raised her eyes to his and rushed into his arms.

"Ah! then you do love me?" she replied, bursting into tears.

She had had the courage to impose silence on her suffering, but she lacked the strength to conceal her happiness.

"Oh! leave her with me for a moment," said the old painter, "and you shall compare her with my Catherine,—yes, I consent."

There was the ring of love in that exclamation of Frenhofer's. He seemed to be playing the coquette for his simulacrum of a woman, and to enjoy in anticipation the triumph which the beauty of his creation was destined to win over that of a girl of flesh and blood.

"Do not let him retract his consent!" cried Porbus, laying his hand upon Poussin's shoulder. "The fruits of love soon pass away, those of art are immortal."

"Pray, am I nothing more than a woman in his eyes?" said Gillette, gazing earnestly at Poussin and Porbus.

Proudly she raised her head; but when, after a piercing glance at Frenhofer, she saw her lover intently contemplating anew the portrait he had once taken for a Giorgione, she exclaimed:

"Come, let us go up! he never looked at me like that."

"Old man," said Poussin, aroused from his meditation by Gillette's voice, "look at this sword: I will bury it in your heart at the first word of complaint uttered by this girl, I will put the torch to your house and no person shall go forth from it. Do you understand?"

Nicolas Poussin's expression was menacing and his voice was awe-inspiring. The young painter's bearing and, more than all else, his gestures comforted Gillette, who almost forgave him for sacrificing her to the art of painting and to his glorious future. Porbus and Poussin remained at the studio

door, gazing at each other in silence. Although the painter of *Marie the Egyptian* ventured at first upon an exclamation or two: "Ah! she is undressing, he is telling her to stand in the light! He is comparing her with the other!" Poussin's aspect soon imposed silence upon him; the young man's face was profoundly sad; and although old painters have none of those scruples which seem so trivial in presence of art, he admired them, they were so artless and winning. The young man had his hand on the hilt of his dagger, and his ear almost glued to the door. Both were standing in the shadow, like two conspirators awaiting the moment to strike down a tyrant.

"Come in, come in," said the old man, beaming with happiness. "My work is perfect, and now I can exhibit it with pride. Never will painter, brushes, colors, canvas, and light produce a rival to *Catherine Lescault*, the beautiful courtesan!"

Impelled by intense curiosity, Porbus and Poussin ran into the centre of a vast studio covered with dust, where everything was in confusion, with pictures hanging on the walls here and there. They paused at first before a life-size picture of a woman, half-nude, at which they gazed in admiration.

"Oh! do not waste time over that," said Frenhofer; "that is a canvas that I daubed to study a pose; that picture is worth nothing at all. Those are my mistakes," he continued, pointing to a number of fascinating compositions on the walls about them.

Thereupon, Porbus and Poussin, dumfounded by that contemptuous reference to such works, looked about for the portrait he had described to them, but could not succeed in finding it.

"Well, there it is!" said the old man, whose hair was in disorder, whose face was inflamed by supernatural excitement, whose eyes snapped, and whose breath came in gasps, like that of a young man drunk with love.—"Ah!" he cried, "you did not anticipate such perfection! You are in presence of a woman and you are looking for a picture. There is such depth of color upon that canvas, the air is so true, that you cannot distinguish it from the air about us. Where is art? lost, vanished! Those are the outlines of a real young woman. Have I not grasped the coloring, caught the living turn of the line that seems to mark the limits of the body? Is it not the self-same phenomenon presented by objects that swim in the atmosphere like fish in the water? Mark how the outlines stand out from the background! Does it not seem to you as if you could pass your hand over that back? For seven years I have studied the effects of the joining of light and figures. See that hair, does not the light fall in a flood upon it? Why, she breathed, I verily believe!—Look at that bosom! Ah! who would not kneel and adore it? The flesh quivers. Wait, she is about to rise!"

"Can you see anything?" Poussin asked Porbus.

"No.—And you?"

"Nothing."

The two painters left the old man to his raving, and looked about to see whether the light, falling too full upon the canvas that he pointed out to them, did not neutralize all its fine effects. They examined the painting from the right side and the left and in front, stooping and standing erect in turn.

"Yes, oh! yes, that is a canvas," said Frenhofer, misunderstanding the object of that careful scrutiny. "See, there are the frame and the easel, and here are my paints, my brushes."

And he seized a brush which he handed them with an artless gesture.

"The old lansquenet is making sport of us," said Poussin, returning to his position in front of the alleged picture. "I can see nothing there but colors piled upon one another in confusion, and held in restraint by a multitude of curious lines which form a wall of painting."

"We are mistaken," said Porbus, "look!"

On drawing nearer, they spied in one corner of the canvas the end of a bare foot standing forth from that chaos of colors, of tones, of uncertain shades, that sort of shapeless mist; but a lovely foot, a living foot! They stood fairly petrified with admiration before that fragment, which had escaped that most incredible, gradual, progressive destruction. That foot appeared there as the trunk of a Parian marble Venus would appear among the ruins of a burned city.

"There is a woman underneath!" cried Porbus, calling Poussin's attention to the layers of paints

which the old painter had laid on, one after another, believing that he was perfecting his picture.

The two artists turned instinctively toward Frenhofer, beginning to understand, but only vaguely as yet, the trance in which he lived.

"He speaks in perfect good faith," said Porbus.

"Yes, my friend," interposed the old man, rousing himself, "one must have faith, faith in art, and live a long, long while with his work, to produce such a creation. Some of those shadows have cost me many hours of toil. See on that cheek, just below the eye, there is a slight penumbra which, if you observe it in nature, will seem to you almost impossible to reproduce. Well, do you fancy that that effect did not cost me incredible labor? And so, dear Porbus, scrutinize my work with care, and you will understand better what I said to you about the manner of treating the model and the contours. Look at the light on the bosom, and see how I have succeeded, by a succession of heavy strokes and relief-work, in catching the genuine light and combining it with the gleaming whiteness of the light tints; and how, by the contrary process, by smoothing down the lumps and roughness of the paint, I have been able, by dint of touching caressingly the contour of my figure, swimming in the half-light, to take away every suggestion of drawing and of artificial methods, and to give it the aspect, the very roundness of nature. Go nearer and you will see that work better. At a distance, it is invisible. Look! at that point, it is very remarkable, in my opinion."

With the end of his brush he pointed out to the two painters a thick layer of light paint.

Porbus put his hand on the old man's shoulder and turned toward Poussin.

"Do you know that in this man we have a very great artist?" he said.

"He is even more poet than artist," said Poussin, with perfect gravity.

"That," added Porbus, pointing to the canvas, "marks the end of our art on earth."

"And, from that, it will pass out of sight in the skies," said Poussin.

"How much enjoyment over that piece of canvas!" exclaimed Porbus.

The old man, absorbed in reverie, did not listen to them; he was smiling at that imaginary woman.

"But sooner or later he will discover that there is nothing on his canvas!" cried Poussin.

"Nothing on my canvas!" exclaimed Frenhofer, glancing alternately at the two painters and his picture.

"What have you done?" said Porbus in an undertone to Poussin.

The old man seized the young man's arm roughly, and said to him:

"You see nothing there, clown! varlet! miscreant! hound! Why, what brought you here, then?—My good Porbus," he continued, turning to the older painter, "can it be that you, you too, are mocking at me? Answer me! I am your friend; tell me, have I spoiled my picture?"

Porbus hesitated, he dared not speak; but the anxiety depicted on the old man's white face was so heart-rending that he pointed to the canvas, saying:

"Look!"

Frenhofer gazed at his picture for a moment and staggered.

"Nothing! nothing! And I have worked ten years!"

He fell upon a chair and wept.

"So I am an idiot, a madman! I have neither talent nor capability! I am naught save a rich man who, in walking, does nothing more than walk! So I shall have produced nothing!"

He gazed at his canvas through his tears, then suddenly rose proudly from his chair, and cast a flashing glance upon the two painters.

"By the blood, by the body, by the head of Christ! you are jealous dogs who seek to make me believe that it is ruined, in order to steal it from me! I see her!" he cried, "she is marvellously lovely."

At that moment, Poussin heard Gillette weeping in a corner, where she lay forgotten.

"What is it, my angel?" asked the painter, suddenly transformed into the lover once more.

"Kill me!" said she. "I should be a vile wretch to love you still, for I despise you.—I admire you, and you make me shudder! I love you, and I believe that I already hate you!"

While Poussin listened to Gillette, Frenhofer covered his *Catherine* with a green cloth, with the grave

calmness of a jeweller closing his drawers in the belief that he is in the company of adroit thieves. He cast a glance of profound hatred on the two painters, a glance overflowing with scorn and distrust, and silently turned them out of his studio with convulsive haste; standing on the threshold of the outer door, he said to them:

"Adieu, my little friends!"

That parting salute froze the blood in their veins. The next day, Porbus, feeling anxious concerning Frenhofer, called once more at his house, and learned that he had died during the night after burning his pictures.

Paris, February 1832.

THE MARANAS

TO MADAME LA COMTESSE MERLIN

*

Notwithstanding the discipline introduced by Maréchal Suchet in his army corps, he could not prevent a spontaneous outbreak of confusion and disorder at the capture of Tarragona. According to some military men of undoubted sincerity, the intoxication of victory in that instance strongly resembled pillage, which the marshal was able to repress promptly. When order was re-established, each regiment encamped in its own quarters, and the commanding officer of the garrison appointed, the military administrators made their appearance. Thereupon the town assumed a mongrel aspect. Although the military organization of the place was entirely on the French plan, they left the Spaniards at liberty to follow their national inclinations, *in petto*.

That first moment of pillage, which lasted for a period of time difficult to determine with accuracy, had, like all sublunary events, a cause that may readily be pointed out. There was in the marshal's army a regiment made up almost entirely of Italians and commanded by a certain Colonel Eugène, a man of extraordinary gallantry, a second Murat, who, because he had taken to the trade of war too late, received no Grand-Duchy of Berg, nor Kingdom of Naples, nor bullets at Pizzo. Although he obtained no crown, he was very advantageously placed for receiving bullets, and it would not be surprising if he

had come in contact with one or two. The original basis of this regiment was the remnant of the Italian legion. That legion was to Italy what the colonial battalions are to France. Its dépôt, on the island of Elba, had served as a place of honorable exile both for scions of noble families who aroused fears for their future, and for those great men who have missed their aim and whom society brands in advance with the hot iron, dubbing them *mauvais sujets*. For the most part, they were men who had not been understood, whose existence may become noble at the pleasure of a woman's smile which raises them out of their brilliant rut, or horrible to contemplate at the end of a debauch, under the influence of some base reflection emitted by their companions in revelry. Napoléon had therefore incorporated those men of energy in the Sixth of the Line, hoping to transform almost all of them into generals, aside from the losses occasioned by the cannon-ball; but the Emperor's reckoning proved to be accurate only with reference to the ravages of death. The regiment in question, often decimated, always the same, earned a high reputation for merit on the military stage, and the most detestable of reputations in private life. At the siege of Tarragona, the Italians lost their famous captain, Bianchi, the same man who had laid a wager during the campaign that he would eat the heart of a Spanish sentinel, and won the wager. This incident of camp life is described elsewhere,—SCENES OF PARISIAN LIFE,—and certain details concerning the Sixth of the Line will there be found, which confirm

all that is said in this place. Although Bianchi was the prince of the demons incarnate to whom this regiment owed its twofold reputation, he had that sort of chivalrous respect for honor which causes the greatest excesses to be forgiven in the army. To tell the whole story in a word, he would have been an excellent filibuster in the last century. A few days before his death, he had distinguished himself by a brilliant action which the marshal desired to recognize in some way. Bianchi refused promotion, pension, new decoration, and requested no other reward than that of leading the assault on Tarragona. The marshal granted his request, and forgot his promise; but Bianchi forced him to remember Bianchi. The outraged captain was the first to plant the French flag on the wall, and was killed there by a monk.

This historical digression was necessary to explain how it came about that the Sixth of the Line was the first to enter Tarragona, and why the disorder, which was by no means unnatural in a town carried by assault, soon degenerated into something resembling pillage.

That regiment contained two officers who were by no means noticeable among those men of iron, but who are, nevertheless, destined to play an important part, by juxtaposition, in this tale.

The first, an officer with a captain's title, whose duties were concerned with the uniforms, a half-military, half-civil functionary, was supposed, in military jargon, *to feather his own nest.* He claimed to

be brave, boasted in society that he belonged to the Sixth of the Line, and could curl his moustaches like a man who was ready to crush everything that came in his way; but his comrades had not an exalted opinion of him. His fortune made him prudent. He had been christened *captain of the crows* for two reasons. In the first place, he could smell powder a league away, and fled from musket-shots as if he had wings; secondly, that sobriquet contained an innocent military pun, which he deserved, by the way, and upon which any other than he would have prided himself.

Captain Montefiore, of the illustrious Montefiore family of Milan, but forbidden by the laws of the Kingdom of Italy to bear the title, was one of the comeliest soldiers in the army. That very comeliness may have been one of the reasons of his prudence on days of battle. A wound that disfigured his nose, ploughed a furrow across his forehead, or seamed his cheek would have marred one of the loveliest Italian faces whose delicate outlines no woman had ever pictured in her reverie. His features, not unlike the type from which Girodet borrowed the dying young Turk in his *Révolte du Caire*, were of the melancholy cast by which women are almost always deceived. The Marquis de Montefiore owned some entailed property, and had pledged the whole income for a number of years in order to pay the cost of certain Italian escapades which are beyond the conception of Parisians. He had ruined himself supporting a theatre in Milan, to force upon the

public a wretched singer who, he said, loved him to distraction. Thus Captain Montefiore had a very promising future, and was not at all anxious to stake it against a paltry bit of red ribbon. If he was not a brave man, he was at all events a philosopher, and he could cite precedents, if we may be permitted to use a parliamentary expression. Did not Philip II. swear, at the battle of Saint-Quentin, that he would not be present again at any fire except that of the pyres of the Inquisition? and did not the Duke of Alva approve his idea, that the most unfortunate business in the world was the involuntary barter of a crown for a leaden bullet? Thus Montefiore was a Philippist in his capacity of marquis, a Philippist in his capacity of well-favored youth, and, furthermore, he was as profound a politician as Philip II. ever was. He consoled himself for his sobriquet and for the slight esteem in which he was held by the regiment, by the thought that his companions were blackguards, whose opinion might some day find little credence, if, perchance, they survived that war of extermination. His face, too, was a certificate of valor; he fancied himself promoted to a colonelcy by force, it might be by some miracle of female favor, or perhaps by a clever metamorphosis from a uniform department officer to an orderly, and from an orderly to an aid-de-camp to some obliging marshal. To him, glory was simply a question of uniform. Some day some newspaper would refer to him as *the gallant Colonel Montefiore*, etc. Then he would have an income of

a hundred thousand scudi, would marry a woman of high lineage, and no one would dare gainsay his gallantry or investigate his wounds.

Captain Montefiore had a friend in the person of the quartermaster, a Provençal, born in the outskirts of Nice, and named Diard. A friend, whether at the galleys or in an artist's garret, makes up for many misfortunes. Now, Montefiore and Diard were two philosophers who consoled themselves for the misfortunes of life by a judicious indulgence in vice, as two artists soothe the sufferings of their lives by hopes of glory. Both considered war in the light of its results, not in its action, and they frankly applied to those who were killed the name of idiots. Chance had made them soldiers, whereas they should have been seated about the green cloth of a congress. Nature had cast Montefiore in the Rizzio mould, and Diard in the crucible of the diplomatist. Both were endowed with that feverish, restless, half-feminine temperament which is equally strong for good and for evil, but from which may emanate, as caprice wills, a crime as well as a noble sentiment, an act denoting grandeur of soul or the act of a dastard. The fate of such men depends from moment to moment upon the more or less powerful influence of violent and fleeting passions upon their nervous organizations. Diard was a very good accountant, but no soldier would have entrusted his purse or his will to him, perhaps because of the antipathy that all military men feel for clerks. The quartermaster did not lack courage nor a sort of youthful generosity,

qualities which some men lay aside as they grow older, as the result of reasoning or of scheming. As variable as the beauty of a blonde, Diard was a braggart, a great talker, and talked on every subject. He called himself an artist, and, in emulation of two famous generals, picked up works of art, for no other reason, as he said, than that posterity should not be deprived of them. His comrades would have been sorely puzzled to pass an accurate judgment upon him. Many of them, who were accustomed to have recourse to his purse, believed him to be rich on that account; but he was a gambler, and gamblers have nothing of their own. He was as much of a gambler as Montefiore, and all the officers played with them: for, to the shame of mankind be it said, it is no rare thing to see men about a green cloth, who do not bow to one another when the game is at an end, and who do not esteem one other. Montefiore had been Bianchi's opponent in the wager concerning the Spaniard's heart.

Montefiore and Diard were in the rear ranks at the time of the assault, but among the first in the heart of the town when it was taken. Such phenomena sometimes occur in *mêlées*. But the two friends were accustomed to them. Supporting each other, they plunged fearlessly into a labyrinth of little, narrow, dark streets, each intent upon his own ends, one seeking painted madonnas, the other living madonnas. In some out-of-the-way corner of Tarragona, Diard recognized a convent by the architecture of the porch; the door had been burst in, and he

leaped into the cloister to stay the fury of the soldiers. He arrived most opportunely, for he prevented two Parisians from putting their bullets through a *Virgin* by Albani, which he purchased from them, despite the moustaches with which the two voltigeurs had embellished it in their military fanaticism. Montefiore, being left alone, noticed, opposite the convent, the house of a dealer in dry goods, from which a shot was fired at him just at the moment when, as he was engaged in looking it over from top to bottom, he was suddenly checked by an electrifying glance flashed upon him by an inquisitive young girl, whose head appeared around the corner of a blind. Tarragona taken by assault; Tarragona in wrath, firing from every window; Tarragona outraged, with dishevelled hair, half-naked, its streets blazing, and flooded with French soldiers killed or killing, was certainly worth a glance, the glance of a courageous Spanish girl. Was it not a bull-fight on a grand scale? Montefiore forgot the pillage and for a moment did not hear the shrieks, nor the rattle of musketry, nor the roar of artillery. The profile of that Spanish girl was the most divinely beautiful thing he had ever seen—he, the Italian libertine, sated with Italian women, sated with women generally, and dreaming of an impossible woman because he was tired of women. He, the rake, who had frittered away his fortune to gratify the thousand mad caprices, the thousand passions of a blasé young man, the most detestable monster that our society can engender—he could

still feel a thrill of pleasure! He conceived a happy thought, inspired, doubtless, by a shot discharged at him by the patriotic tradesman: he would set fire to the house. But he was alone, without the necessary materials; the centre of the battle was on the great square, where a few obstinate fellows were still defending themselves. Thereupon he conceived a still happier thought. Diard came out of the convent; Montefiore said nothing to him of his discovery, and made several raids with him in the town. But the next day, the Italian captain was regularly billeted upon the dealer in dry goods. Was it not the natural abode of an officer of the clothing department?

The worthy Spaniard's house consisted of a spacious, ill-lighted shop on the ground-floor, provided with heavy iron bars on the outside, like the old warehouses on Rue des Lombards in Paris. The shop communicated with a parlor lighted from an inner courtyard; a large room instinct with the spirit of the Middle Ages: old smoke-begrimed pictures, old tapestries, an old-fashioned brazier, the hat with plumes hanging on a nail, the guerrilla's musket, and Bartholo's cloak. The kitchen adjoined that living-room, that one room in which the family ate and warmed themselves by the dull flame of the brazier, smoking cigars, and haranguing to excite one another's hearts to hatred against the French. Silver jugs and valuable plate adorned an old-fashioned buffet. But the light, being grudgingly admitted, permitted the brilliant objects to emit only the faintest gleam; and,

as in a picture of the Dutch school, everything became dark brown in that room, even faces. Between the shop and that salon, so rich in color and in patriarchal life, was a dark staircase leading to a wareroom, lighted by windows judiciously placed to allow the examination of the goods. Above was the apartment of the tradesman and his wife. The rooms of the apprentice and a female servant were located in an attic, under a roof which overhung the sidewalk and was supported by buttresses which gave a curious aspect to the building; but their rooms were appropriated by the merchant and his wife, who gave up their own apartments to the officer, doubtless to avoid any dispute.

Montefiore represented himself to be a former subject of Spain, who had been persecuted by Napoléon and was serving him against his will. The semi-falsehoods had the success which he anticipated. He was invited to take his meals with the family, as befitted his name, his birth, and his title. Montefiore had his motives for seeking to make sure of the tradesman's good-will: he smelt his madonna as the ogre smelt the fresh flesh of little Poucet and his brothers. But, notwithstanding the confidence he succeeded in inspiring in the draper, the latter maintained the most absolute secrecy concerning that same madonna; and not only could the captain detect no trace of a young woman during the first day that he passed under the honest Spaniard's roof, but he heard no sound and saw absolutely nothing to indicate the presence of such a person in that ancient

establishment. However, every sound could be heard so distinctly through the floors of the building, which was almost entirely of wood, that Montefiore hoped, during the silence of the early hours of the night, to be able to ascertain where the young unknown lay hidden. Fancying that she was the only daughter of the old people, he supposed that they had consigned her to the attic chambers, where they had taken up their own abode for so long a time as the French occupation might last. But nothing occurred to disclose the hiding-place of that priceless treasure. The officer stood with his face glued to the little lozenge-shaped panes, divided by lines of lead, of the window looking on the inner courtyard, a dark enclosure surrounded by walls; but he saw no gleam of light there, save that that shone from the windows of the room where the two old people were, talking and coughing, and passing to and fro. Of the girl, not even the shadow.

Montefiore was too cunning to endanger the future of his passion by venturing to prowl about the house at night or to knock softly at doors. To be discovered by that ardent patriot, who was as suspicious as a Spanish father and draper should be, would be to ruin himself infallibly. The captain resolved, therefore, to wait patiently, hoping for the best results from time and the imperfection of mankind, for even the greatest villains, *a fortiori* the honest men, invariably end by omitting some precaution. The following day, the sight of a kind of hammock in the kitchen revealed to him the sleeping-place of the

maid-servant. As for the apprentice, he slept on the counter in the shop. At supper, on the second day, Montefiore, by dint of cursing Napoléon, succeeded in smoothing the wrinkles from the careworn brow of his host, a grave, dark-faced Spaniard, like those formerly carved on the handles of rebecks; and his wife unearthed a cheerful smile of hate from among the folds of her venerable face. The lamp and the reflections of the brazier fitfully lighted that noble room. The hostess had just offered their semi-compatriot a cigarette. At that moment, Montefiore heard the rustling of a dress and the fall of a chair behind a tapestry hanging.

"Mercy!" ejaculated the woman, turning pale, "may all the saints help us and grant that no harm has been done!"

"Is there someone there?" asked the Italian, with no outward trace of excitement.

The draper muttered an exclamation uncomplimentary to young women. His wife, in dire dismay, opened a secret door and led forth the Italian's madonna, half-dead, but the delighted lover seemed to pay no heed to her. To avoid all appearance of affection, he glanced at the girl, then turned to his host, and said in his maternal tongue:

"Is she your daughter, senor?"

Perez de Lagounia—such was the draper's name—had had extensive business relations with Genoa, Florence, and Leghorn; he knew Italian, and answered in the same tongue:

"No. If she had been my daughter, I should

have taken fewer precautions. This child has been placed in our care, and I would prefer to die rather than that the least misfortune should happen to her. But the idea of reasoning with a girl of eighteen!"

"She is very beautiful," said Montefiore, coldly, no longer looking at the girl.

"The mother's beauty is very famous," replied the tradesman.

They continued to smoke, each watching the other. Although Montefiore had imposed upon himself a rigid obligation to abstain from the slightest glance that would tend to belie his apparent indifference, he took advantage of a moment when Perez turned away his head to expectorate, to glance stealthily at the girl, and met her sparkling eyes. But in that moment, with that keenness of vision which gives a rake as well as a sculptor the fatal power to disrobe a woman, so to speak, to divine her charms by inductive reasoning both rapid and unerring, he saw before him one of those masterpieces whose creation demands all the joys of love. She had a white face, to which the sun of Spain had imparted some slight touches of a darker shade which added to an expression of seraphic tranquillity a burning pride, a rich glow infused beneath that transparent tint, due, perhaps, to the pure Moorish blood that gave it life and color. Her hair, arranged in masses on top of her head, fell and surrounded with its glossy black tresses the transparent pink ears, marking the outlines of a neck in which the blue veins showed faintly. Those luxuriant curls

brought out in bold relief the gleaming eyes and the red lips of a gracefully curved mouth. The national *basquine* showed to the best advantage the curving contours of the body, as flexible as a willow twig. She was not the Virgin of Italy, but the Virgin of Spain, of Murillo, the only artist with sufficient courage to depict her as drunken with the joy of having given birth to Christ, a delirious fancy of the boldest, the most warm-blooded of painters. There were three qualities united in that girl, a single one of which was enough to make a woman divine: the purity of the pearl lying at the bottom of the sea, the sublime exaltation of the Spanish Saint Theresa, and the lust that does not suspect its own existence. Her presence had all the virtue of a talisman. To Montefiore's eyes nothing in his surroundings seemed old; the girl had made everything young. The apparition was as brief as it was delicious. The stranger was taken back to the mysterious chamber, where the servant thereafter carried food and light to her without concealment.

"You do well to conceal her," said Montefiore in Italian, "I will keep your secret for you, *Diavolo!* We have generals quite capable of kidnapping her in military style."

Montefiore's intoxication went so far as to suggest to him the idea of marrying the unknown. Thereupon he asked his host for some information concerning her. Perez willingly narrated the story of the events to which he owed his ward, and the prudent Spaniard was induced to make this disclosure,

not only by the eminence of the Montefiores, of whom he had heard in Italy, but to show how strong were the barriers which protected the girl from possible seduction. Although the goodman had a certain patriarchal eloquence in harmony with his simple manners and with the blunderbuss shot fired at Montefiore, his narrative will be improved by condensation.

About the time when the French Revolution effected a change in the morals of the countries which were the theatre of its wars, there came to Tarragona a courtesan who had been driven from Venice by the fall of Venice. The life of that creature was a tissue of romantic adventures and strange vicissitudes. Thanks to the whim of a nobleman who was captivated by her extraordinary beauty, it happened to her more frequently than to any other woman of that extra-social class, to be for a greater or less time gorged with gold and jewels, surrounded with the innumerable luxuries of wealth. There were flowers and carriages, pages and lady's maids, palaces, pictures, overweening pride, such journeys as Catherine II. made,—in a word, the life of a queen, absolute in her caprice and often obeyed beyond her dreams. Then—and neither she nor any other person, were he scholar, physician, or chemist, could discover by what process her gold evaporated—she would fall back upon the pavement, poor, stripped of everything, retaining naught but her omnipotent beauty, but living on without any thought for the past, the present, or the

future. Dragged down and held fast in her destitution by some poor gambling officer whose moustache she adored, she would cling to him like a dog to its master, sharing with him only the discomforts of that military life whose burden she lightened for him; but inured to everything, sleeping as cheerfully in a garret under the eaves as amid the most sumptuous silken curtains. Italian and Spanish at once, she was scrupulously exact in the observance of religious duties, and more than once she had said to Love: "Come again to-morrow; to-day I belong to God." But that mire kneaded with gold and perfumes, that reckless indifference to everything, those fierce passions, that religious belief tossed into that heart like a diamond into the mud, that life begun and ended at the hospital, that trust in the chances of the gambler extended to the heart, to the whole existence; and, lastly, that mysterious alchemy wherein vice fanned the flame beneath the crucible in which the greatest fortunes were being melted down, in which the wealth of noble ancestors and the honor of great names were turning into vapor and vanishing: all proceeded from a peculiar nature, faithfully transmitted from mother to daughter since the Middle Ages. That woman's name was LA MARANA. In her family, exclusively confined to females, the idea, the person, the name, the power, of a father had been absolutely unknown since the thirteenth century. The name *Marana* was to her what the dignity of *Stuart* was to the illustrious royal race of Scotland, a name of honor

substituted for the family name because the same office had been held by the same family in unbroken lines of descent, and as an hereditary right.

Long ago, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when France and Italy and Spain had common interests which forced them to be constantly at war, the word Marana meant prostitute, in the broadest acceptation of the word. In those days, such women had a certain standing in society of which there is nothing at the present day to give us any idea. Ninon de l'Enclos and Marion de Lorme are the only women who ever played, in France, the rôle of the Imperias, the Catilinas, the Maranas, who, in the preceding centuries, welcomed beneath their roofs the most eminent representatives of the frock, the gown, and the sword. An Imperia built some church or other at Rome, in a spasm of repentance, as Rhodope long ago built a pyramid in Egypt. The name Marana, inflicted originally as a mark of opprobrium on the extraordinary family we have mentioned, eventually became its name, and ennobled its vicious instincts by the unquestionable antiquity of its vice.

Now, one day, the Marana of the nineteenth century—whether it was a day of opulence or of poverty, no one can say, that problem was a secret between God and herself; but certainly it was in an hour of piety and melancholy—that woman, we say, found herself with her feet in the mire and her head among the clouds. Thereupon she cursed the blood in her veins, she cursed herself, she shuddered

at the thought of having a daughter, and swore, as such women swear, with the honesty and the determination of the galleys—the most stubborn determination and the most scrupulous honesty under heaven; she swore before an altar, believing in the sanctity of the altar, that she would make of her daughter a virtuous creature, a saint, in order to provide, after that long succession of amorous crimes and abandoned women, an angel to plead for them all in heaven. The oath taken, the blood of the Maranas spoke aloud, and the courtesan returned to her vicious life, with one more thought in her heart. At last, it fell to her lot to love with the fierce love of prostitutes, as Henrietta Wilson loved Lord Ponsonby, as Mademoiselle Dupuis loved Bolingbroke, as the Marchioness of Pescara loved her husband; but no, she did not love, she adored one of those fair-haired men, half-woman, to whom she attributed the virtues that she had not, determined to keep for herself all that was vicious. Then, by that empty-headed man, as the fruit of that insane marriage,—marriage of the sort that is never blessed by God or man, which may be justified but is never absolved by happiness, and for which the most shameless men blush sooner or later,—she had a daughter, a daughter to save, a daughter for whom she desired a worthy life and, above all, the modesty which she herself lacked. Thereafter, whether she were happy or wretched, rich or poor, she had in her heart one pure sentiment, the most beautiful of all human sentiments, because it is the most unselfish. Love has

a selfishness of its own, but maternal love has none. La Marana was such a mother as no mother ever was; for in her hopeless shipwreck, maternity might be a plank of salvation. To accomplish devoutly a part of her earthly task, by sending one angel more into Paradise, was this not better than a tardy repentance? was not this the only pure prayer that she was permitted to offer up to God? And so, when that daughter, when her Maria-Juana-Pepita—she was resolved to give her for patronesses all the saints of the legend—when that tiny creature was given to her, she had such an exalted idea of the majesty of a mother, that she implored vice to grant her a truce. She turned virtuous, and lived alone. No more fêtes, no more nights of love. All her fortune, all her joys, were in her child's fragile cradle. The tones of that infantile voice made for her an oasis in the burning sands of life. There was no means of comparing that sentiment with any other. Did it not include all human sentiments and all divine hopes? La Marana did not wish her daughter to be marred by any other taint than that of the original sin of her birth, and she tried to baptize her in all the social virtues; so she called upon the young father for a fortune and a father's name. Thus the girl was no longer a Juana Marana, but Juana de Mancini. And when, after seven years of joy and kisses, of delirious happiness, it became necessary for poor Marana to part from her idol, that she might not have to hang her head beneath the hereditary shame, that mother had the courage to abandon her child for her

child's sake, and looked about, not without horrible agony, in search of another mother for her, a family, a moral code to adopt, devout examples to imitate. A mother's abdication is either a ghastly or a sublime act; in this case was it not sublime?

A lucky chance brought her in contact with the Lagounias at Tarragona, under circumstances which enabled her to appreciate the upright character of the Spaniard, and his wife's eminent virtue. She came into their lives like an angel of salvation. The draper's fortune and his honor, temporarily endangered, demanded speedy and secret assistance: La Marana handed him the amount of Juana's dowry, asking for neither acknowledgment nor interest. In her system of jurisprudence, a contract was an affair of the heart; a dagger, the justice of the weak; and God, the supreme tribunal. After laying bare her wretched plight to Donna Lagounia, she entrusted child and fortune to the old Spanish honor which lived pure and undefiled in that venerable house. Donna Lagounia had no children of her own, and she was overjoyed to have an adopted child to bring up. The courtesan parted from her dear Juana, certain that she had assured her future and had found a mother for her, a mother who would make of her a Mancini and not a Marana. On leaving the draper's simple and modest house, where the bourgeois family virtues had their abode, where religion, sanctity of feeling, and honor were in the very air, the poor unfortunate, a mother bereft of her child, was able to endure her agony by the thought of Juana as

maiden, wife, and mother, a happy mother throughout a long life. The courtesan left upon the threshold of the house one of those tears which the angels gather up. Since that day of mourning and of hope, La Marana, guided by obstinate presentiments, had returned on three occasions to see her daughter. The first time Juana was dangerously ill.

"I knew it!" she said to Perez upon her arrival.

In her sleep, when she was far away, she had seen Juana dying. She waited upon her and nursed her; and then, one morning during her daughter's convalescence, when she had fallen asleep, the mother kissed her on the forehead and went away without betraying herself. The mother expelled the courtesan. The second time La Marana came to the church where Juana de Mancini was receiving the sacrament. Simply dressed, hidden in the obscurity behind a pillar, the self-proscribed mother recognized herself as she had once been in her daughter, a celestial, angelic face, as pure as the snow newly fallen on the mountain-top. A courtesan in her very maternity. La Marana felt in the depths of her heart a jealousy stronger than all loves together, and she went from the church, incapable of resisting longer the longing to kill Donna Lagounia, as she saw her there with radiant face, too faithful to her rôle of mother.

The last meeting between the mother and daughter took place at Milan, whither the draper and his wife had travelled with Juana. La Marana was driving on the Corso with all the magnificence of a sovereign;

she passed her daughter as swiftly as a flash of lightning, and was not recognized by her. Frightful anguish! That Marana, laden with kisses, lacked but one, a single one, for which she would have sold all the others, the warm, joyful kiss given by a daughter to her mother, to an honored mother, to a mother in whom all the domestic virtues are resplendent. Juana, though living, was dead to her! A single thought gave new life to that courtesan, as the Duc de Lina said to her: "What is the matter, my love?" A blessed thought! Juana was saved. She would be the humblest of women, perhaps, but not a debased courtesan to whom all men could say: "What is the matter, my love?" In truth, the tradesman and his wife had performed their duty with scrupulous uprightness. Juana's fortune, had it become theirs, would have increased tenfold. Perez de Lagounia, the wealthiest merchant in the province, had a half-superstitious feeling for the girl. Had not the presence of that divine creature, after saving his ancient house from a dishonorable downfall, brought him unheard-of prosperity? His wife, a heart of gold and full of delicacy of sentiment, had made of her a devout child, as pure as she was beautiful. Juana was as well fitted to be the wife of a nobleman as of a wealthy merchant; she would be found lacking in none of the qualities suited to a brilliant destiny; had it not been for subsequent events, Perez, who had dreamed of living in Madrid, would have married her to some Spanish grandee.

"I know not where La Marana is to-day," said Perez, in conclusion; "but, in whatever part of the world she may be, if she learns of the occupation of our province by your armies and the siege of Tarragona, she is certain to be on the way hither, to watch over her daughter."

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This history changed the Italian captain's plans; he no longer thought of making Juana de Mancini the Marquise de Montefiore. He recognized the blood of the Maranas in the glance the young girl had exchanged with him through the blind, in the stratagem she had just employed to gratify her curiosity, in the last look she had bestowed upon him. That libertine desired a virtuous woman for his wife. The adventure upon which he proposed to embark was full of dangers, but dangers of the sort that never daunt a man of any courage, for love and its pleasures were to be their recompense. The apprentice sleeping on the counter, the maid-servant on guard in the kitchen, Perez and his wife sleeping lightly, doubtless, as old people sleep, the resonant quality of the house, the watchfulness of a dragon during the day—everything combined to make of that love an impossible love. But Montefiore had on his side, opposed to this mass of impossibilities, the blood of the Maranas which bubbled in the heart of that inquisitive Italian, a Spaniard in morals, a virgin in fact, and impatient to love. Passion, the girl, and Montefiore in combination could defy the whole universe.

Montefiore, impelled as much by the instinct of men of intrigue as by those vague hopes which we cannot explain, and to which we give the name of

presentiments,—a word of extraordinary aptness,—Montefiore passed the early hours of the succeeding night at his window, looking intently down toward the probable location of the cell in which the husband and wife had confined the love and joy of their old age. The wareroom on the entresol—to use a French term which will convey a better understanding of the situation of the premises—separated the two young people. The captain could not resort, therefore, to significant taps upon the floor, an entirely artificial language which lovers can readily invent on such occasions. But chance came to his aid, or it may have been the girl herself! As he took his place at the window, he saw upon the black wall of the courtyard a circle of light, in the centre of which was Juana's silhouette; the constant movement of the arms, the attitude, all indicated that she was arranging her hair for the night.

"Is she alone?" Montefiore asked himself. "Can I safely tie a letter, weighted with a few coins, at the end of a string, and knock against the glass in the round window by which her cell is evidently lighted?"

He at once wrote a note, just such a note as one would expect from an officer, a soldier exiled by his family to the island of Elba,—the note of the outlawed marquis, formerly perfumed with musk, now an officer in charge of uniforms. Then he made a cord of everything that could be made to serve that purpose, tied the note to it, weighted with several crowns, and lowered it in profound silence to the centre of the spherical light.

"The shadows on the wall will tell me if her mother or her servant is with her, and, if she is not alone," thought Montefiore, "I will pull my cord up again in a hurry."

But when, after a thousand difficulties easy to understand, the money struck the glass, a single figure, the little figure of Juana, appeared upon the wall. The girl opened the window very gently, saw the note, took it, and remained standing while she read it. Montefiore had given his name, and solicited a meeting; in the style of the old romances, he offered his heart and his hand to Juana de Mancini. A dishonorable and vulgar ruse, but always certain of success! At Juana's age, nobility of soul augments the perils of youth. A poet of those days has well said: "Woman yields only in her strength." The lover pretends to doubt the love he has inspired at the moment when he is most dearly loved; a young girl, proud and trustful, would fain invent sacrifices, and is not familiar enough with the world or with men to remain calm in the midst of her ebullient passions, and to overwhelm with her scorn the man who can accept a life offered in expiation of a fallacious reproach.

Since the sublime organization of societies, the young girl is constantly subjected to the heart-rending torture caused in equal degree by the calculations of sagacious virtue and the unhappy consequences of a misstep. She often loses a love, the first love, in appearance the sweetest, if she resists; she loses a chance to marry if she is imprudent. As we cast

a glance upon the vicissitudes of social life in Paris, it is impossible to doubt the necessity of a religion, knowing that there are none too many girls seduced every evening. But Paris is situated on the forty-eighth parallel, and Tarragona on the forty-first. The old question of climates is still useful to story-tellers, to justify both the abrupt dénouements and the imprudences or the resistance of love.

Montefiore's eyes were fixed upon the graceful black profile outlined in the centre of the circle of light. He and Juana could not see each other; a wretched cornice, most inconveniently located, deprived them of all the advantages of the mute correspondence which may be carried on between two lovers when they lean from their windows. Thus the captain's whole heart and attention were concentrated on that luminous circle, where, perhaps unconsciously, the girl artlessly allowed her thoughts to be interpreted by the gestures that escaped her. But no. Juana's singular movements did not afford Montefiore the slightest ground for hope. Juana amused herself by cutting the note. Virtue and morality often imitate, in their suspicion, the foresight inspired by jealousy in the Bartholo of the old comedies. Having neither pen, ink, nor paper, Juana answered with the scissors. Soon she fastened the note to the string once more, the officer pulled it up, opened it, held it in the light of his lamp, and read, in letters cut with the scissors: *Come!*

"Come?" he said to himself. "And what about poison, and Perez's blunderbuss and dagger? And

the apprentice barely asleep on the counters! and the servant-girl in her hammock! And this house, which is as resonant as the voice of a bass-singer at the Opéra, so that I can hear old Perez snoring from here! Come!—Can it be that she has nothing to lose?"

Painful thought! Only libertines can be so logical and punish a woman for her devotion. Man invented Satan and Lovelace; but the virgin is an angel to whom he is incapable of attributing aught save his own vices; she is so great, so beautiful, that he can neither make her greater nor embellish her: naught has been given to him save the fatal power to mar her loveliness by luring her into his vile life. Montefiore waited until the drowsiest hour of the night; then, despite his reflections, he stole downstairs without his shoes and armed with his pistols, felt his way step by step, stopped to listen to the silence, put out his hands, felt for the stairs, almost saw in the darkness, ready at any moment to return to his room at the slightest sound. The Italian had donned his handsomest uniform, he had perfumed his black hair, and his appearance was marked by that peculiar splendor which careful attention to the intricacies of the toilet imparts to natural beauty; at such times, most men are as much like women as any woman can be.

Montefiore succeeded in arriving without interruption at the secret door of the closet to which the girl had been consigned, a hiding-place arranged in a corner of the house, which was made broader

at that point by one of those curious projections which are not infrequently seen where men are compelled, on account of the high price of land, to crowd their houses close together. The cell belonged exclusively to Juana, who stayed there all day, hidden from every eye. Hitherto, she had always slept with her adopted mother; but the diminutive size of the attic in which the old people had taken refuge did not allow them to take their ward with them. Donna Lagounia had left the girl, therefore, under the watch and ward of the secret door, under the protection of the most efficient religious ideas,—for they had become superstitions,—and under the safeguard of an inborn pride and a sensitive modesty which made of the young Mancini an exception to the generality of her sex: she had in equal measure its most attractive virtues and its most passionate inspirations; indeed, nothing less than the modesty, the sanctity, of that monotonous life would have sufficed to soothe and cool the heated blood of the Maranas which bubbled in her heart, and which her adopted mother called the temptations of the devil.

A faint ray of light, shining out on the floor through the crack of the door, enabled Montefiore to fix its location; he tapped gently, and Juana opened the door. Montefiore entered with fast-beating heart, and recognized, in the attitude and expression of the recluse, ingenuous curiosity, the most complete ignorance of her danger, and a sort of innocent admiration. He stood for a moment,

deeply impressed by the sanctity of the picture presented to his eyes.

The walls were hung with tapestry, with a gray background strewn with violet flowers; a small ebony chest, an old-fashioned mirror, a huge old armchair also of ebony, and upholstered in tapestry; a table with twisted legs; a pretty carpet on the floor; a chair beside the table; that was all. But on the table were flowers and a piece of embroidery; in the background, a light, narrow bed on which Juana dreamed; above the bed, three pictures; by the pillow, a crucifix and vessel for holy water, a prayer printed in letters of gold and framed. The flowers exhaled a faint perfume, the candles shed a soft light; everything was peaceful and pure and holy. Juana's dreamy ideas, but Juana herself most of all, had communicated their charm to everything, and her soul seemed to give forth light; it was the pearl in its shell. Juana, dressed in white, beautiful in her own beauty, laying aside her rosary to summon love, would have inspired respect even in Montefiore himself, had not the silence, the darkness, and Juana been so instinct with love, had not the little white bed displayed its turned-down sheets and the pillow, the confidant of innumerable vague desires. For a long time, Montefiore stood motionless, drunken with a joy hitherto unknown, perhaps the joy that Satan felt when he caught a glimpse of heaven through an opening in the clouds that formed its outer wall.

"As soon as I saw you," he said, in pure Tuscan

and in a melodious Italian voice, "I loved you. In you my heart and my life have been since then, in you they will be forever, if you choose."

Juana listened, inhaling in the air the music of those words which the tongue of love made magnificent.

"Poor child, how have you been able to breathe so long in this dark house without pining away? You, who were made to reign in society, to dwell in the palace of a prince, to go from fête to fête, to feel the joy to which you give birth, to see the whole world at your feet, to outshine the fairest treasures by the treasures of your beauty, which will encounter no rivals—you have lived here, alone, with these two tradespeople!"

A selfish question. He wished to ascertain if Juana had had a lover.

"Yes," she replied. "But who can have told you my most secret thoughts? For several months I have been deathly sad. Yes, I should prefer death to remaining longer in this house. See yonder embroidery: there is not a stitch that was not accompanied by ghastly thoughts. How many times I have longed to escape and throw myself into the sea! Why? I have forgotten already. Petty, childish griefs, but very keen, despite their folly. Many and many a time I have kissed my mother at night as one kisses one's mother for the last time, saying to myself inwardly: 'To-morrow I will kill myself.' But I did not die. The suicides go to hell, and I was so afraid of hell that I resigned myself to live, to

continue to go to bed and rise and work at the same hours, and do the same thing. I was not tired, but I suffered.—And yet my father and mother adore me. Ah! I am a wicked girl! I tell my confessor so."

"Pray, have you never had any diversion, any pleasures?"

"Oh! I have not always been like this. Until I was fifteen years old, the singing and music and festivals of the Church gave me the greatest pleasure. I was happy to feel that I was like the angels, without sin, and to be able to attend communion every week—in short, I loved God. But for the last three years, all my feelings have changed from day to day. First I wanted flowers here, and I had very beautiful ones; then I wanted— But I want nothing more," she added, after a pause, smiling at Montefiore. "Did you not write me that you would always love me?"

"Yes, my Juana," cried Montefiore, softly, putting his arm about the lovely girl's waist and pressing her to his heart, "yes. But let me speak to you as you speak to God. Are not you lovelier than the Mary in heaven? Listen to me. I swear to you," he continued, kissing her hair, "I swear, taking your forehead for the fairest of altars, to make of you my idol, to lavish upon you all the wealth of the world. My carriages are yours, my palace at Milan, all the jewels and diamonds of my ancient family; every day you shall have new dresses and all the innumerable pleasures and joys of the world!"

"Yes," said she, "I love all those things; but I feel in my heart that the thing I shall love best in the world will be my dear husband.—*Mio caro sposo!*" was what she said; it is impossible to impart to the English words the fascinating tenderness, the amorous melody of sound which the Italian pronunciation gives to those three sweet words; and Italian was Juana's mother-tongue.—"I shall find," she continued, with a glance at Montefiore in which shone the purity of the cherubim, "I shall find my religion again in him. He and God, God and he.—And are you he?" she said.—"Yes, surely you are he!" she cried, after a pause. "Stay, come and see the picture my father brought me from Italy."

She took a candle, motioned to Montefiore, and pointed out to him, at the foot of the bed, a Saint Michael slaying the devil.

"See, has he not your eyes? So, when I saw you in the street, the meeting seemed to me a warning from Heaven. During my early morning musings, before my mother called me to pray, I had gazed so much at that painting, that angel, that I had come to look upon him as my husband. Merciful God! I am talking to you just as I talk to myself. I must seem very foolish to you; but if you only knew how a poor recluse longs to tell the thoughts that stifle her! When I was alone, I used to speak to these flowers, to these bouquets in the tapestry: they understood me better, I think, than my father and mother, who are always so grave."

"Juana," said Montefiore, seizing her hands and

kissing them with a passion that blazed forth in his eyes, in his movements, in the tones of his voice, "speak to me as to your husband, as to yourself. I have suffered all that you have suffered. Very few words between us will be enough to enable us to understand each other's past; but there will never be words enough to describe our happiness to come. Put your hand on my heart. Do you feel how it beats? Let us promise before God, who sees us and hears us, to be true to each other throughout our lives. Here, take this ring—give me yours."

"Give you my ring!" she cried in dismay.

"Why not, pray?" queried Montefiore, disturbed by such absolute innocence.

"Why, it came to me from our Holy Father the Pope; it was put on my finger in my childhood by a beautiful lady who brought me up, who placed me in this house, and who bade me keep it always."

"Then you do not love me, Juana?"

"Oh! here it is," she said. "Is it not better for you to have it than for me?"

She held out the ring with trembling hand, but retained it while she gazed into Montefiore's face with searching, penetrating lucidity. That ring was her whole being: she gave it to him.

"O my Juana," he said, folding her in his arms, "a man must be a monster to deceive you. I will love you forever."

Juana had fallen into a reverie. Montefiore, reflecting that, in that first interview, he must hazard nothing that could give the alarm to so spotless a

creature, imprudent through virtue rather than through desire, relied upon the future, upon his beauty, whose power he well knew, and upon the innocent marriage with the ring, the most solemn of unions, the lightest and strongest of all ceremonies, the hymen of love. Juana's imagination would inevitably be an accomplice of his passion during the rest of the night and the following day. He forced himself, therefore, to be as respectful as he was affectionate. In that view, assisted by his passion and even more by the desires Juana aroused in him, he was unctuous and caressing in his language. He embarked the innocent girl upon all sorts of projects of a new life, described the world in the most brilliant colors, discoursed of the household details in which young girls take so much pleasure, entered with her into those much-discussed agreements which give reality and a semblance of legality to love. Then, after agreeing upon a regular hour for their nocturnal meetings, he left Juana happy, but changed; the pure and saintly Juana no longer existed: in the last glance she gave him, in the pretty movement she made to put her forehead to her lover's lips, there was more passion than it is becoming in a young girl to display. Solitude, the burden of occupations that were repugnant to the girl's nature, had done it all; to make her virtuous, it would have been necessary to accustom her gradually to the world, or to hide her from it forever.

"To-morrow will seem very long," she said, as she received upon her forehead a kiss, still chaste.

"But stay in the living-room, and speak a little loud so that I can hear your voice, for it fills my heart."

Montefiore, divining the whole secret of Juana's life, was the more pleased that he had succeeded in holding his passion in check, the better to ensure its gratification. He returned to his room without accident. Ten days passed, and nothing occurred to disturb the peaceful solitude of that house. Montefiore had exerted all his Italian cajolery upon old Perez, upon Donna Lagounia, upon the apprentice, even upon the maid-servant, and they all loved him; but notwithstanding the confidence he had been able to inspire in them, he had not chosen to avail himself of it to ask to see Juana, to open the door of her charming retreat. The young Italian girl, hungry for a sight of her lover, had often begged him to do it; but he had always refused, as a matter of prudence. For he had put forth all his influence and all his skill to lull the suspicions of the old people to sleep, he had accustomed them to see him, soldier as he was, lie in bed until mid-day. The captain had said that he was ill. Therefore the lovers lived only at night, when everybody in the house was asleep. If Montefiore had not been one of those libertines whom familiarity with pleasure enables to retain their presence of mind on all occasions, they would have been lost ten times during those ten days. A youthful lover, in the ingenuous ecstasy of a first love, would have yielded to the temptation to indulge in charming imprudences which it is so hard to resist. But the Italian resisted Juana in the

sulks, Juana in a frenzy, Juana making with her long hair a chain which she passed about his neck to detain him. The result was that the most keen-sighted of men would have been greatly embarrassed to guess the secret of their nightly meetings. It is probable that the Italian, sure of success, gave himself the ineffable pleasure of a seduction advancing step by step, of a conflagration which gains headway gradually and ends by enveloping everything. On the eleventh day, at dinner, he deemed it advisable to inform old Perez, under the seal of secrecy, that the cause of his disgrace in his family was an unsuitable marriage. That false confidence was a ghastly thing in the midst of the nocturnal drama that was being played in that house. Montefiore, like an experienced gambler, was preparing a dénouement, which he enjoyed in anticipation, like an artist who loves his art. He intended soon to leave the house and his love, without regret. And when Juana, venturing her life, perhaps, in a question, should ask Perez where his guest was, Perez would tell her, having no suspicion of the importance of his reply: "The Marquis de Montefiore has become reconciled to his family, who consent to receive his wife, and he has gone to present her to them."

And Juana?—The Italian had never asked himself what would become of Juana; but he had carefully studied her nobility of soul, her candor, all her virtues, and he was sure of Juana's silence.

He obtained a mission from some general. Three days later, during the night, the night preceding his

departure, Montefiore, intending, doubtless, like a tiger, to leave nothing of his prey, instead of going to his own room, went to Juana immediately after dinner, in order to enjoy a longer night of leave-taking. Juana, a true Spaniard and a true Italian, impelled by a twofold passion, was overjoyed at that audacity: it implied such ardent affection! To find in the pure love of marriage the cruel joys of an illicit connection; to conceal her husband behind her bed-curtains; partially to deceive her adopted father and mother, and to be able to say to them in case of surprise: "I am the Marchioness of Montefiore!" Was not that a fête for a romantic young girl, who for three years had not dreamed of love without dreaming of all its dangers? The tapestry door was closed upon them, upon their follies and their happiness, like a veil which it is useless to raise.

It was about nine o'clock; the draper and his wife were reading the evening prayers; suddenly the wheels of a carriage drawn by several horses rumbled through the narrow street; the shop rang with hasty blows upon the door; the servant ran and opened it. Instantly a woman rushed into the antique living-room in two strides, a woman magnificently dressed, although she had alighted from a travelling carriage horribly splashed with the mud of a thousand roads. Her carriage had traversed Italy, France, and Spain. It was La Marana! La Marana, who, despite her thirty-six years, despite her dissipated life, appeared in all the splendor of a *belta folgorante*, to preserve the admirable expression invented for her by her

passionate supporters at Milan; La Marana, who, although the acknowledged mistress of a king, had left Naples, the festivities of Naples, the sky of Naples, at the apogee of her life of gold and flattery, of silks and perfumes, when she learned from her royal lover of recent events in Spain and of the siege of Tarragona.

"To Tarragona before Tarragona is taken!" she had exclaimed. "I must be at Tarragona in ten days!"

And, heedless of court and crown, she had arrived at Tarragona, armed with a quasi-imperial firman, and supplied with gold which enabled her to fly through the French Empire with the velocity of a rocket and with all the brilliancy of a rocket. For mothers, there is no space; a true mother foresees everything, and sees her child from one pole to the other.

"My daughter? my daughter?" cried La Marana.

At that voice, at that sudden invasion, at the sight of that uncrowned queen, the prayer-book fell from the hands of Perez and his wife; that voice echoed like the thunder, and La Marana's eyes emitted lightning-flashes.

"She is there," replied the draper in a calm tone, after a pause, during which he recovered from the emotion caused by La Marana's abrupt arrival, her expression and her voice. "She is there," he repeated, pointing to the little cell.

"Yes, but has she not been ill? she is still—"

"Perfectly well," said Donna Lagounia.

"O God, now cast me into hell for eternity, if such be Thy pleasure," cried La Marana, falling upon a chair, exhausted, half-dead.

The flush upon her cheeks, due to her anxiety, suddenly faded away, she turned pale. She had had the strength to endure suffering, she had none left for her joy. The joy was more violent than her grief had been, for it contained the echoes of that grief and the anguish of joy.

"But what did you do?" she said. "Tarragona was taken by assault."

"Yes," Perez replied. "But, when you saw me alive, how could you ask me the question? Would they not have had to kill me in order to reach Juana?"

At that reply, La Marana seized Perez's callous hand and kissed it, dropping upon it the tears that came to her eyes. They were her most precious possessions under heaven, for she never wept.

"Good Perez!" she said at length. "But you must have had soldiers quartered on you?"

"A single one," replied the Spaniard. "Luckily, we have the most honorable of men, one who was formerly a Spaniard, an Italian who hates Bonaparte, a married man, a cold-blooded man. He rises late, and goes to bed early. He is not well just at this time."

"An Italian! What is his name?"

"Captain Montefiore."

"Why, it cannot be the Marquis of Montefiore?"

"Yes, señora, himself."

"Has he seen Juana?"

"No," said Donna Lagounia.

"You are mistaken, wife," said Perez. "The marquis has seen Juana, for a very brief moment, it is true, but I think that he must have looked at her the day she came in here during supper."

"Ah! I want to see my daughter."

"Nothing can be easier," said Perez. "She is asleep. If she has left the key in the lock, we shall have to rouse her."

As he rose to get the double key of the door, his eyes fell by chance upon the high window. Thereupon, in the circle of light cast upon the black wall of the inner courtyard by the large round window of the cell, he saw the silhouette of a group which no sculptor could ever have conceived prior to the graceful fancy of Canova. The Spaniard turned.

"I do not know where we have put that key," he said to La Marana.

"You are very pale!" said she.

"I will tell you why," he rejoined, leaping upon his dagger, which he seized, and with which he pounded fiercely on Juana's door, crying: "Juana, open! open!"

His tone expressed a terrible desperation which froze the blood in the veins of the two women.

And Juana did not open because she needed some time to conceal Montefiore. She knew nothing of what was taking place in the living-room. The double portières of tapestry deadened the voices.

"I lied to you, señora, when I said that I did not

know where the key is. It is here," continued Perez, taking it from the sideboard. "But it is useless. Juana's key is in the lock, and her door is barricaded.—We are deceived, my wife!" he said, turning toward her. "There is a man with Juana."

"By my everlasting salvation, it is impossible!" his wife replied.

"Swear not, Donna Lagounia. Our honor is dead, and this woman"—he pointed to La Marana, who had risen and was standing like a statue, crushed by his words—"this woman has the right to despise us. She saved our lives, our fortune, and our honor, and we have been able to keep only her money for her!—Open the door, Juana," he cried, "or I will burst it open!"

His voice, increasing in violence, rang through the house from garret to cellar. But he was cold and calm; he held Montefiore's life in his hands, and he intended to wash away his remorse with all the Italian's blood.

"Begone, begone, begone all of you!" cried La Marana, pouncing upon the dagger with the agility of a tigress, and snatching it from the hands of the astonished Perez.—"Go, Perez," she continued, tranquilly; "go, you and your wife, and your apprentice and your servant. There is murder to be done here. You might all be shot by the French. Take no part in what is to happen, it concerns me alone. There must be none but God between my daughter and myself. As for the man, he belongs

to me. The whole earth should not tear him from my hands! Go, go, I say,—I forgive you. This girl is a Marana. You and your religion and your honor were too weak to struggle against my blood."

She uttered a terrible sigh and pointed to her dry eyes. She had lost everything, and knew how to suffer: she was a courtesan. The door opened. La Marana forgot everything, and Perez, making a signal to his wife, was allowed to remain at his post; a typical old Spaniard, inexorable on the point of honor, he desired to aid the outraged mother in her vengeance. Juana, dressed in white, stood calmly in the soft light in the middle of her room.

"What do you want with me?" she said.

La Marana could not repress a slight shudder.

"Perez," she said, "is there any other exit from this closet?"

Perez shook his head; and the courtesan, relying upon that answer, walked into the room.

"Juana, I am your mother, your judge, and you have placed yourself in the only position which could have induced me to make myself known to you. You have come to me, you whom I ordained for heaven. Ah! you have fallen very low!—You have a lover in your room."

"Señora, there should be, there can be, no one here but my husband. I am the Marchioness of Montefiore."

"Are there two of them, then?" said old Perez in his grave voice. "He told me that he was married."

"Montefiore, my love!" cried the girl, tearing away the curtains and revealing the officer, "Come, these people are slandering you!"

The Italian was pale and white-lipped; he saw a dagger in La Marana's hand, and he recognized La Marana.

So, with a bound, he rushed from the room, shouting in a voice of thunder:

"Help! help! a Frenchman is being murdered!—Soldiers of the Sixth of the Line, run and find Captain Diard!—Help!"

Perez had seized the marquis and was about to make a natural gag with his broad hand when the courtesan checked him.

"Hold him fast," she said, "but let him shout. Throw open the doors and leave them open, but go away, I tell you once more.—As for you," she continued, turning to Montefiore, "shout, call for help.—When I hear the footsteps of your men, you shall have this blade in your heart.—Are you married? Answer."

Montefiore had fallen on the threshold, within two steps of Juana; he no longer heard anything, he no longer saw anything, unless it were the dagger-blade, whose bright gleam dazzled him.

"So he deceived me!" said Juana, slowly. "He said that he was free."

"He told me that he was married," repeated Perez in his grave voice.

"Blessed Virgin!" cried Donna Lagounia.

"Will you answer me, heart of mud?" said La

Marana in a low voice, putting her lips to the marquis's ear.

"Your daughter—" said Montefiore.

"The daughter that I had is dead or about to die," rejoined La Marana. "I no longer have a daughter. Do not utter that word again. Tell me, are you married?"

"No," said Montefiore, at last, to gain time. "I wish to marry your daughter."

"My noble Montefiore!" exclaimed Juana, breathing once more.

"Then why did you fly and call for help?" demanded the Spaniard.

A terrible question.

Juana said nothing, but wrung her hands and sat down in her armchair. At that moment, there was an uproar outside, which was heard distinctly on account of the absolute silence that reigned within. A soldier of the Sixth of the Line, who happened to be passing through the street when Montefiore called for help, had gone to notify Diard. The quartermaster, who luckily had returned to his lodgings, came to the rescue, accompanied by several friends.

"Why did I fly?" replied Montefiore, as he heard his friend's voice, "because I told you the truth.—Diard! Diard!" he cried in a piercing voice.

But, at a word from his master, who was resolved that his whole household should have a share in the murder, the apprentice secured the door, and the soldiers were obliged to burst it open. Before they entered, therefore, La Marana had abundant time to

JUANA TO LA MARANA

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strike the culprit a blow with the dagger; but her intense wrath prevented her from taking accurate aim, and the blade glanced off Montefiore's epaulet. Nevertheless, she put so much strength in the blow that the Italian staggered and fell at the feet of Juana, who did not notice him. La Marana leaped upon him; and, in order not to miss him again, she took him by the throat, held him with a grasp of iron, and aimed at his heart.

"I am free and I will marry her! I swear it by God, by my mother, by all that is most sacred on earth! I am unmarried, I will marry her, on my word of honor!"

And he bit at the courtesan's arm.

"Go on, mother, kill him!" said Juana. "He is too much of a dastard, I would not have him for my husband if he were ten times more beautiful."

"Ah! I have found my daughter once more," cried the mother.

"Well, what is going on here?" queried the quartermaster, appearing on the scene.

"Just this," cried Montefiore: "they're murdering me in the name of this girl, who claims that I am her lover, who led me into a trap, and whom they are trying to force me to marry against my will."

"You do not wish her?" cried Diard, impressed by the sublime beauty which indignation, contempt, and hatred imparted to Juana's face, already so beautiful. "You are very hard to suit! If she wants a husband, here am I. Put up your dagger."

La Marana seized the Italian, raised him, led him to her daughter's bed, and said in his ear:

"If I spare you, you may thank your last words. But mark what I say! If your tongue ever speaks ill of my daughter, we shall meet again.—Of what does the dowry consist?" she asked Perez.

"She has fully two hundred thousand piastres."

"That will not be all," said the courtesan to Diard. "Who are you?—You may go," she added, turning to Montefiore.

When he heard the reference to two hundred thousand piastres, the marquis stepped forward, saying:

"I am really free—"

A glance from Juana imposed silence on him.

"You are really free to go," she said.

And the Italian left the house.

"Alas! señor," continued the girl, addressing Diard, "I thank you with all my heart. My husband is in heaven, he is Jesus Christ. To-morrow I shall enter the convent of—"

"Hush! Juana, my Juana!" cried the mother, throwing her arms about her.—"You must have another husband," she said in her ear.

Juana turned pale.

"Who are you, señor?" she said, looking at the Provençal.

"As yet," he said, "I am only quartermaster in the Sixth of the Line. But a man feels that he has the heart to become a marshal of France for such a wife. My name is Pierre-François Diard. My father was provost of the merchants; so I am not a—"

"Well! you are an honest man, are you not?" cried La Marana. "If you are agreeable to Signora Juana de Mancini, you can both be happy.—Juana," she continued, in a serious tone, "when you become the wife of an excellent and worthy man, remember that you will some day be a mother. I swore that you should be able to kiss your children on the forehead without blushing."—At that point, her voice quivered slightly.—"I swore that you should be a virtuous woman. You must expect many trials in this life; but, whatever happens, remain pure, and be faithful in everything to your husband; sacrifice everything to him, for he will be the father of your children.—A father to your children!—Remember! you will always find your mother standing between yourself and a lover; I shall be your mother in times of danger only.—Do you see Perez's dagger? It is included in your dowry," she said, taking the weapon and tossing it on Juana's bed, "I leave it with you as a guaranty of your honor, so long as my eyes are open and my arms free.—Adieu," she said, forcing back her tears; "I pray Heaven that we may never meet again!"

At that thought, her tears flowed in abundance.

"Poor child, you have been very happy in this cell, happier than you think!—See to it that she never longs to return to it," she said, glancing at her future son-in-law.

This purely introductory sketch is not the principal subject of this Study, for a clear understanding of which it was necessary to explain, first of all,

how it happened that Captain Diard married Juana de Mancini; how Montefiore and Diard became acquainted, and to give the reader an idea of the nature of Madame Diard's heart and temperament, and of the passions by which she was governed.

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When the quartermaster had complied with the long and tedious formalities, without which a French soldier is not permitted to marry, he had fallen passionately in love with Juana de Mancini. Juana de Mancini meanwhile had had time to reflect upon her destiny. A ghastly destiny! Juana, who had neither esteem nor affection for Diard, was bound to him none the less by a promise,—an imprudent promise, doubtless, but a necessary one. The Provençal was neither handsome nor well built. His manners, which were entirely devoid of refinement, smacked in equal measure of the vulgarity of the army, the customs of his province, and an incomplete education. And could she love Diard—that young woman, all grace and all refinement, with an unconquerable instinctive fondness for luxury and good taste, and attracted by her birth toward the sphere of the higher classes of society? Even esteem she denied to Diard, precisely because Diard was willing to marry her. This feeling of repulsion was perfectly natural. Woman is a saintlike and beautiful creature, but almost always misunderstood, and almost always misjudged because she is misunderstood. If Juana had loved Diard, she would have esteemed him. Love creates in woman a new woman: the woman of the day before has ceased to exist on the morrow. The nuptial robe of a passion in which the whole life is

involved is pure and white when a woman puts it on. Born again, virtuous and modest, she has no past; she is all future, and she must forget everything in order to learn everything anew. In this view, the line which a modern poet has put in the mouth of Marion Delorme is steeped in truth—a genuine Corneillian verse by the way:

"Et l'amour m'a refait une virginité."*

Does not that line seem like a reminiscence of one of Corneille's tragedies, the notably energetic style of the father of our stage is so strikingly reproduced? And yet the poet was compelled to sacrifice it to the essentially vaudevillist genius of the pit.

And so, Juana, without love in her heart, remained the deceived, humiliated, degraded Juana. She could not honor the man who accepted her under those conditions. In all the conscientious purity of youth, she felt that distinction, subtle in appearance, but profoundly true, and legitimate from the standpoint of the heart,—a distinction which all women, even those who are least given to reflection, instinctively draw in all their sentiments. Juana became profoundly sad when she discovered the full meaning of life. She often turned her eyes, filled with tears which her pride kept from falling, upon Perez and upon Donna Lagounia, both of whom understood the bitter thoughts expressed in those tears; but they held their peace. What would

*"And love endowed me with a new virginity."

reproaches avail? Why should they offer consolation? The more earnestly it is offered, the more it tends to augment the misfortune.

One evening, Juana, dazed with misery, heard through the door of her cell, which the old people thought was closed, a pitying exclamation from her adopted mother.

"The poor child will die of grief!"

"Yes," replied Perez, in a voice that betrayed deep emotion. "But what can we do? Shall I go now and extol my ward's chaste beauty to the Count of Arcos, to whom I hoped to marry her?"

"A single misstep is not vice," said the old woman, as indulgent as ever an angel could be.

"Her mother gave her away!" rejoined Perez.

"Hastily, and without consulting her!" cried Donna Lagounia.

"She knew perfectly well what she was doing—"

"Such hands for our pearl to fall into!"

"Not another word, or I shall pick a quarrel with that—Diard!"

"And that would be another misfortune."

Listening to those terrible words, Juana realized what a happy destiny had been marred by her fault. The pure and innocent hours spent in her peaceful retreat would have been rewarded by that splendid and brilliant existence of whose joys she had so often dreamed—dreams that had caused her ruin. To fall from the summit of grandeur to *Monsieur* Diard!—Juana wept, Juana almost went mad. For some time, she hesitated between vice and religion.

Vice meant a speedy ending; religion, a whole life of suffering. Her meditation was stormy and momentous. The next day was a fatal day, the day of the wedding. Juana could still remain Juana. Free, she knew the probable extent of her misfortune; married, she knew not how far it might reach. Religion triumphed. Donna Lagounia came to pray and watch beside her daughter as devoutly as she would have prayed and watched beside a dying woman.

"It is God's will," she said to Juana.

Nature gives to woman alternately a peculiar strength which assists her to suffer, and a weakness which counsels resignation. Juana resigned herself to her lot without reservation. She determined to comply with her mother's wishes and to cross the desert of life in order to reach heaven, knowing well that she would find no flowers in her painful journey. She married Diard. As for the quartermaster, although he did not find favor in Juana's sight, who would not have absolved him for marrying her? he loved her madly. La Marana, naturally expert in foreshadowing love, had recognized in his conduct the accent of genuine passion, and had divined in him the outspoken character, the generous impulses peculiar to men of the South. In the frenzy of her great wrath, she had perceived only Diard's good qualities, and she believed that she could detect enough of those to assure her daughter's happiness forever.

The early days of the marriage were apparently

happy; or, to put in words one of those latent facts, all the miseries of which women bury in the depth of their hearts, Juana did not choose to crush her husband's joy. A double rôle, terribly hard to play, but which the majority of women who are unhappily married do play sooner or later. A man can describe only the facts of this life; female hearts alone divine its sentiments. The story is an impossible one to tell in all its vividness. Juana, struggling every hour against her twofold nature, Spanish and Italian at once, having drained dry the fountain of her tears by weeping in secret, was one of those typical creations intended to represent female unhappiness in its greatest development: a grief incessantly at work, which to describe would require such minute observation, that, to people eager for dramatic emotions, it would become dull and wearisome. Such an analysis, in which every husband and wife would seek to discover some of his or her own grievances, in order to understand them all, would require an entire volume. A volume ungrateful by its very nature, whose merit would consist in delicate tints, in fine distinctions which the critics would consider insipid and diffuse. Indeed, who that has not another heart in his heart could approach those profound, affecting elegiacs which some women carry with them to the tomb: melancholy misunderstood even by those who cause it; sighs unrequited, devotion without reward,—earthly reward, at all events; honorable silence misconstrued; vengeance disdained; generosity never-ending yet

wasted; pleasures craved and abortive; deeds of angelic charity performed in secret;—in a word, all their pious aspirations and their inextinguishable love? Juana became acquainted with that life, and fate spared her no detail. She was all woman, but woman unhappy and suffering, woman constantly insulted and always forgiving, woman pure as a spotless diamond; with the beauty and splendor of the diamond, and in that beauty, in that splendor, a revenge ready to her hand. She certainly was not a girl to fear the dagger added to her dowry.

Meanwhile, animated by a genuine love, by one of those passions which momentarily transform the most detestable characters, and bring out all the noble qualities that a soul contains, Diard comported himself at first like a man of honor. He compelled Montefiore to leave the regiment, and the army corps as well, so that his wife might not meet him during the short time that he proposed to remain in Spain. Then the quartermaster requested to be transferred, and succeeded in obtaining admission to the Garde Impériale. He was determined to obtain at any price a title, and honors, and a degree of consideration proportioned to his great fortune. With that object in view, he showed great gallantry in one of the bloodiest battles in Germany; but he was wounded there too dangerously to remain in the service. Threatened with the loss of a leg, he obtained his discharge, but without the title of baron, without the rewards he had hoped to obtain, and which he might perhaps have obtained

had he not been Diard. That event, his wound, his disappointed hopes, contributed to change his disposition. His Provençal energy of character, momentarily excited to a high pitch, suddenly subsided. Nevertheless, he was at first sustained by his wife, in whom his efforts, his gallantry, his ambition, inspired some little faith in her husband, and who was more likely than other women to show herself what women are, comforting and affectionate in the tribulations of life. Inspired by some words that Juana let fall, the retired major came to Paris, and determined to win an eminent position in civil life, which should command respect, cause the quartermaster of the Sixth of the Line to be forgotten, and endow Madame Diard some day with a fine title. His passionate affection for that fascinating creature assisted him to divine her secret wishes. Juana said nothing, but he understood her; he was not loved as a lover dreams of being loved; he knew it, and he determined to compel her to esteem and love and cherish him. The unfortunate man had a feeling that happiness would come at last, because his wife was gentle and patient under all circumstances; but that gentleness, that patience, betrayed the resignation to which he owed Juana. Resignation, piety—were these love? Often Diard would have preferred a refusal to the virtuous obedience with which his wishes were met; often he would have given his eternal life to have Juana deign to weep upon his bosom, and not disguise her thoughts beneath a laughing mask which lied for a noble end. Many

young men—for at a certain age we cease to struggle—strive to triumph over the evil destiny whose clouds gather, from time to time, on the horizon of life; and when they are writhing in the abysses of misfortune, we should give them credit for those unknown conflicts.

Like many men, Diard tried everything, and everything was hostile to him. His fortune enabled him to surround his wife with all the enjoyments of Parisian luxury: she had a magnificent mansion, large salons, and reigned over one of those great establishments to which artists flock, being by nature far from critical, and a few schemers who help to swell the number, and people who go whereever they can be amused, and certain men of fashion, all in love with Juana. All those who put themselves forward in Paris must either subdue Paris or bend the knee to Paris. Diard's was not a sufficiently strong, well-knit, persistent character to obtain a commanding position in the society of that epoch, because, at that epoch, everyone was trying to rise. Ready-made social classifications are, perhaps, a benefit, even for the people. Napoléon has told us of the pains he took to impose respect upon his court, where most of his subjects had been his equals. But Napoléon was a Corsican, and Diard a Provençal. As between two men of equal genius, the islander will always be more complete than he of the mainland; and the arm of the sea which separates Provence from Corsica, both being in the same latitude, is, human science to the contrary

notwithstanding, a whole ocean which makes two countries of them.

His false position, which he made even falser, was the cause of great misfortunes to Diard. Perhaps there may be something to be learned in the imperceptible sequence of events which brought about the catastrophe of this story. In the first place, the mocking spirits of Paris smiled maliciously when they saw the pictures with which the ex-quartermaster embellished his house. Masterpieces purchased only yesterday were included in the silent reproach which everyone bestowed upon those that had been taken by right of conquest in Spain, and that reproach was the vengeance of the self-esteem of those to whom Diard's wealth was an insult. Juana understood some of the expressions with a double meaning in which the French language abounds. Thereupon, by her advice, her husband sent the pictures back to Tarragona. But the public, determined to look at things in the worst light, said: "This Diard is a sly rogue; he has sold his pictures." Well-meaning people continued to believe that the pictures which remained in the salon were not honestly obtained. Some jealous women asked how *a Diard* had succeeded in marrying so rich and so lovely a girl. Upon that there were comments and sarcastic remarks without end, of the sort that one hears in Paris. Juana, however, was greeted everywhere with a respect enjoined by her pure and religious life, which triumphed over everything, even Parisian calumny; but that respect stopped short at her and

did not extend to her husband. Her feminine perspicacity and her flashing glance, hovering about her salons, brought her only sorrow.

This disesteem was a very natural thing. Military men, notwithstanding the virtues with which the imagination clothes them, never forgave the ex-quartermaster of the Sixth of the Line, precisely because he was rich and wanted to cut a figure in Paris. Now, in Paris, from the last house in Faubourg Saint-Germain to the last house on Rue Saint-Lazare, between the hill of the Luxembourg and the hill of Montmartre, all those people who dress and chatter, who dress to go out and go out to chatter, all that multitude of grand and petty airs, that multitude clad in impertinence and lined with humble desires, with envy and with toadyism, all those who are newly gilded or whose gilt has been rubbed off, young and old, nobles of yesterday or nobles of the fourth century, all who sneer at an upstart, all who are afraid of compromising themselves, all those who seek to overthrow a power, reserving the right to worship it if it resists:—all those ears hear, all those tongues tell, all those intellects learn, in a single evening, where the new-comer, who aspires to honors in that society, was born, where he grew up, and what he has done or failed to do. If there be no assize court for the upper classes of society, it has to reckon with the most cruel of prosecuting officers, a moral, intangible being, at once judge and executioner: he accuses and he brands. Do not seek to conceal anything

from him, but tell him everything of your own volition; he is determined to discover everything and he discovers everything. Do not ask where the unknown telegraph is that transmits to him, on the instant, in the twinkling of an eye, wherever he may be, a story, a bit of scandal or of news; do not ask who manipulates it. That telegraph is a social mystery, an observer can only record its effects. There are some startling examples of its workings, a single one will suffice. The death of the Duc de Berri, who was murdered at the Opéra, was known in the depths of Ile Saint-Louis in the tenth minute after the crime was committed. The opinion of Diard entertained by the Sixth of the Line leaked out in society the same evening that he gave his first ball.

Diard, therefore, could make no further progress in that social circle. Thenceforth his wife alone had the power to make something of him. It is one of the miracles of our extraordinary civilization, that, if a man, in Paris, is able to make nothing of himself, his wife, when she is young and clever, affords him opportunities of self-advancement. There have been women, apparently ill and feeble, who, without rising from their couch, without leaving their bedroom, have ruled society, set a thousand springs in motion, and placed their husbands where they vaingloriously wished to be placed. But Juana, whose childhood had been passed innocently in her cell at Tarragona, was familiar with none of the vices, none of the dastardly expedients, none of the resources of

Parisian society; she watched it like an inquisitive child and learned nothing of it, save that which her sorrow and her wounded pride revealed to her. But Juana had the tact of a virgin heart, which received impressions in advance, after the manner of sensitive plants. The young recluse, so suddenly transformed into a wife, realized that, if she tried to compel the world to honor her husband, it would resemble begging in the Spanish fashion, blunderbuss in hand. And would not the frequent recurrence and the multiplicity of the precautions she would be obliged to take, necessarily indicate their meaning? Between not making himself respected at all, and making himself respected too much, there was, so far as Diard was concerned, a yawning chasm. Suddenly she divined the real nature of society as she had lately divined the real meaning of life, and she could see naught for herself in any direction, save the boundless expanse of an irreparable misfortune. Furthermore, she had the chagrin of realizing too late the peculiar incapacity of her husband, who was of all men the least fitted for anything that demanded a sequence of ideas. He had no comprehension of the rôle he wished to play in society, he neither grasped it as a whole nor appreciated its details, and the details were everything. He was in one of those situations in which force may readily be replaced by finesse. But finesse, which always succeeds, is perhaps the greatest of all forces.

Now, Diard, far from wiping out the grease-spot made by his antecedents, took the greatest trouble

to extend it. For instance, being unable to understand the phase the Empire had reached when he appeared on the scene, he endeavored, although he was only a major, to be appointed to a prefecture. At that time, belief in Napoléon's star was almost universal, his favor had given added importance to everything. The prefectures, those empires on a small scale, must henceforth be filled only by great names, by chamberlains of His Majesty the Emperor and King. The prefects had already become viziers. Wherefore the makers of great men scoffed at the major's avowed ambition, and Diard began to solicit a sub-prefecture. There was a ridiculous disproportion between the modesty of his aspirations and the magnificence of his fortune. To throw open salons worthy of a king, to live in the most insolently luxurious style, and then to turn his back upon that millionaire existence and go to Issoudun or Savenay, would surely be to derogate from his position. Juana, becoming acquainted too late with our laws, our manners, our administrative customs, enlightened her husband too late. Diard, in despair, solicited all the ministerial dignitaries in succession; Diard, repulsed everywhere, could obtain nothing, and thereupon society judged him as the government had judged him, and as he judged himself. Diard had been grievously wounded on a battle-field, and Diard had no decoration. The quartermaster, immensely rich but devoid of consideration, found no place in the State; society logically refused him the place in society to which he aspired. Lastly, the

poor fellow, in his own home, was conscious on all occasions of his wife's superiority. Although she used what we should call a *velvet* touch, if the epithet were not too bold, to disguise in her husband's eyes the supremacy at which she was herself amazed and which humiliated her, Diard ended by being affected by it. At the game he was playing, men necessarily sink or rise, or become wicked. That man's courage, or his passion, diminished under the repeated blows which his mistakes dealt his self-esteem, and he made mistake upon mistake. In the first place, he had everything to contend with, even his own habits and character. A hot-blooded Provençal, open in his vices as well as in his virtues, Diard, whose fibres resembled the strings of a harp, was all heart where his former friends were concerned. He helped those who were rolling in the mud as freely as the needy of high rank; in a word, he denied no man, and gave his hand to poor devils in his own gilded salon. Which seeing, the general of the Empire, a variety of the human species of which there will soon be no specimen in existence, did not embrace Diard, but addressed him insolently as "My dear fellow!" when he greeted him. While the generals masked their insolence under their bluff, soldierly good humor, the few people in good society whom Diard met treated him with that refined, polished contempt against which a man newly risen from the ranks is almost always defenceless. Furthermore, Diard's bearing, his half-Italian gesticulation, his language, his manner of

dressing, everything about him repelled the respect which careful observation of the things that constitute good form enables vulgar people to command, and which imposes a yoke that only those high in power can throw off. So goes the world.

These details convey but a feeble idea of the thousand and one tortures of which Juana was the victim; they came one by one; each social unit contributed its pin-prick, and who can conceive the excruciating agony of a heart that prefers dagger-thrusts in that constant conflict in which Diard received insults without feeling them and Juana felt them without receiving them? There came a moment, a horrible moment, when she had a clear perception of the world, and felt simultaneously all the sorrows that were amassed there for her in advance. She deemed her husband to be altogether incapable of climbing to the upper rungs of the social ladder, and realized how far he would descend on the day when his heart should fail him. Thereupon Juana pitied Diard. The future was very dark for the young woman. She lived in constant dread of a disaster, without any idea whence the disaster was likely to come. That presentiment was in her mind as contagion is in the air; but she was able to summon strength to disguise her agony with smiles. She had reached a point where she no longer thought of herself. Juana exerted her influence to make Diard abandon all his aspirations, and to point to the sweet and beneficent life of the domestic hearth as a haven of refuge. Their woes came from society,

therefore they must banish society. In his own home, Diard would find peace and respect; he would reign there. She felt strong enough to accept the severe task of making him happy, dissatisfied as he was with himself. Her energy increased with the difficulties of life, she had all the secret heroism essential for one in her position, and was inspired by those religious desires which uphold the angel to whom is confided the protection of a Christian soul: poetical superstition, allegorical images of our double nature.

Diard abandoned his projects, closed his doors, and lived within four walls, if we may be allowed to use so familiar an expression. But there was the reef. The poor soldier had one of those eccentric natures which demand perpetual motion. He was one of those men who are instinctively compelled to start off again as soon as they have arrived, and whose main purpose in life seems to be to come and go incessantly, like the wheels mentioned in Holy Writ. Perhaps, too, he was striving to escape from himself. Although he did not weary of Juana, although he could make no accusation against her, his passion for her, allayed by possession, ceased to control his true character. Thereafter his moments of depression were more frequent, and he constantly gave way to outbreaks of his Southern temper. The more virtuous and irreproachable a woman is, the more a man loves to find her in fault, even though it be for no other purpose than to demonstrate his lawful superiority; but if, perchance, he stands absolutely in awe of her, he feels the need of

fabricating offences to impute to her. When that point is reached, trifles assume enormous proportions, as between man and wife, and become mountains. But Juana, patient without arrogance, gentle without that bitterness with which women can poison their submission, afforded no foothold for premeditated malice, the most cutting of all varieties of malice. Then, too, she was one of those noble creatures whom it is impossible to mistake; her glance, in which her whole life shone forth saintly and pure, her martyr's glance had the oppressiveness of a fascination. Diard, bored at first, then wounded, ended by looking upon his wife's exalted virtue as a yoke about his neck. His wife was so virtuous that she caused him no violent emotions, and emotions were what he craved. There are myriads of scenes enacted in the inmost recesses of hearts, beneath the cold exterior of an existence apparently simple and commonplace. It is difficult to select an example from all those little dramas, which last so short a time, but make such a lasting impression upon life, and are almost always presages of the great misery preordained in the majority of marriages. There is one scene, however, which will serve to fix the moment when misunderstanding began in the life of those two. Perhaps it will serve also to explain the conclusion of this story.

Juana had two children, two boys, luckily for her. The first had come seven months after her marriage. He was named Juan, and resembled his mother. She had had the second two years after her arrival in

Paris. He resembled both Juana and Diard, but especially Diard, and he received his names. For five years Francisque had been the object of Juana's most devoted care. The mother's mind was constantly engrossed by that one of her children: the playful caresses, the toys, were all for him, and, above all else, the mother's melting glances; Juana had watched him from his cradle, she had studied his cries, his movements; she tried to divine his character in order to direct his education accordingly. It seemed that Juana had but that one child. The Provençal, seeing that Juan was almost cast aside, took him under his protection; and without pausing to consider whether the little fellow was the fruit of the ephemeral love-affair to which he owed Juana, that husband, with a sort of praiseworthy flattery, made of him his Benjamin. Of all the sentiments which she inherited with the blood of her female ancestors, and which consumed her, Madame Diard yielded to none but maternal love. But she did love her children, and she loved them with the sublime intensity of passion of which the example was set by the Marana who appeared in the preamble of this narrative, and with the charming modesty, with the refined appreciation of the social virtues, her practice of which was the glory of her life and her secret reward. The secret thought, the conscientious mother-love, which had imprinted a seal of rude poesy on La Marana's life, were, in Juana's case, confessedly her whole life, her hourly consolation. Her mother had been virtuous as other

women are criminal, by stealth; she had stolen her mute happiness, she had not enjoyed it. But Juana, unhappy through virtue as her mother was unhappy through vice, enjoyed every hour the ineffable pleasure which her mother had so craved and of which she had been deprived. For her, as for La Marana, maternity comprised all terrestrial emotions. Both of them, for contrary reasons, had no other consolation in their wretchedness. Juana loved more, perhaps, because, having been reared without love, she measured the joys that she did not know by those of her children, and because there are some noble passions that resemble vices: the more they are gratified, the more violent they grow. The mother and the gambler are insatiable. When Juana saw the generous forgiveness to which Diard gave expression every day by his paternal affection for Juan, she was touched; and from the day when the husband and wife exchanged rôles, the Spaniard really conceived for Diard that profound and genuine regard of which she had previously given him so many proofs from a sense of duty simply. If that man had been more consistent in his life, if he had not, by the heedlessness, the levity, and fickleness of his character, neutralized the flashes of a genuine, although nervous, emotion, Juana would doubtless have loved him. Unfortunately, he was a perfect type of those clever southerners whose ideas, clever though they be, are without sequence: capable of great things at night, but capable of nothing in the morning; often victims of their virtues, and

often happy in their evil passions; and most excellent men when their good qualities are bound together by unflagging energy. Thus for two years Diard was held in bondage at home by the softest of chains. He lived, almost in spite of himself, under the influence of a woman who forced herself to be cheerful and amusing for him; who employed all the expedients of feminine genius to fascinate him in the name of virtue, but whose address did not go so far as to simulate love.

At that moment, all Paris was excited over the case of a captain in the old army, who, in a paroxysm of debauchery, had murdered a woman. On returning home to dinner, Diard informed Juana of the officer's death. He had killed himself to avoid the disgrace of a trial, and a dishonorable death on the scaffold. Juana did not understand at first the logic of his conduct, and her husband was obliged to explain to her the laudable theory of the French law, which does not allow the prosecution of dead men.

"But didn't you tell us the other day, papa, that the king could pardon?" inquired Francisque.

"The king can give the man only his life!" exclaimed Juan, half-angrily.

Diard and Juana, both of whom were spectators of this scene, were very differently affected by it. The glance, dim with joy, which his wife cast upon the elder of the two boys, unhappily revealed to the husband the secret of that heart, until then impenetrable. The elder was all Juana; Juana knew him,

she was sure of his heart, of his future; she adored him, and her passionate love for him was a secret between herself, her child, and God. Juan instinctively enjoyed the sharp words he received from his mother, who hugged him as if she would stifle him when they were alone, and who pretended to be cross to him in the presence of his father and brother. Francisque was all Diard, and his mother's loving care betrayed her desire to combat the father's vices and foster his good qualities in the child. Unaware that her glance had spoken too loudly, Juana took Francisque in her lap, and in a gentle voice, which was still tremulous with the joy she had felt at Juan's reply, she gave him a lesson suited to his understanding.

"His character demands very careful treatment," said the father to Juana.

"Yes," she replied, simply.

"But Juan!"

Madame Diard, alarmed by the tone in which the words were uttered, glanced at her husband.

"Juan was born perfect," he added.

With that he seated himself with a frown upon his face; and, as his wife said nothing, he continued:

"There is one of *your* children whom you love better than the other."

"You know it very well," she said.

"No!" retorted Diard; "hitherto, I have never known which you preferred."

"Why, neither of them has as yet caused me any unhappiness," she replied, earnestly.

"True, but which has caused you more joys?" he asked, more earnestly still.

"I have not counted them."

"Women are terribly false!" cried Diard. "Dare to say that Juan is not the child of your heart?"

"If it were so," she replied, with noble dignity, "would you consider it a misfortune?"

"You have never loved me! If you had chosen, I could have conquered kingdoms for you. You know all that I tried to do, sustained simply by the desire to please you. Ah! if you had loved me!"

"A woman who loves," said Juana, "lives in solitude and far from the world. Is not that what we are doing?"

"I know you are never in the wrong, Juana."

Those words were uttered with profound bitterness, and caused a coldness between them all the rest of their lives.

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On the day following that fatal day, Diard called upon one of his former comrades, and found there the distraction of play. Unluckily, he won a large sum of money, and he returned again and again. Thereupon, he fell back by insensible degrees into the dissipated life he had formerly led. Soon he ceased to dine at home. After he had passed several months in the enjoyment of the first delights of independence, being determined to retain his liberty, he separated from his wife, abandoning the large apartments to her and taking up his own quarters in an entresol. After a year, Diard and Juana met only in the morning, at the breakfast-hour. Like all gamblers, he won and lost alternately. As he did not wish to encroach upon his principal, he was desirous to take from his wife's hands the disposition of the income; one day, therefore, he withdrew from her the share she had had in the management of the house. Unlimited confidence was succeeded by the precautions of distrust. Then, with reference to the funds, which were formerly looked upon as common property, he adopted the method of making his wife a monthly allowance for her needs, and they fixed the figure together; the talk that they had on that subject was the last of those private conversations which are among the most attractive features of married life. Silence between two hearts is a genuine

divorce, on the day when the *we* is no longer used. Juana understood that from that day she was a mother only, and she was happy in the thought, nor did she seek the cause of that unfortunate state of affairs. That was a great mistake. Children make the father and mother jointly responsible for their lives, and her husband's secret life should have been something more than a cause of sadness and suffering to Juana. Diard, emancipated, speedily accustomed himself to lose or win enormous sums. Being a fine player and a player for high stakes, he became famous by his manner of playing. The consideration which he had not been able to secure under the Empire, he secured, under the Restoration, by means of his fortune, which rolled on the green cloth, and by means of his renowned skill at all games. Ambassadors, the greatest bankers, men of great wealth, and all those who, because they have lived at too high pressure, seek at the gaming-table its inordinate pleasures, admired Diard at their clubs, rarely in their own houses, but they all played with him. Diard became the fashion. Once or twice during the winter, as a matter of pride, he gave a party to return the courtesies he had received. On those occasions, Juana saw society once more, through those vistas of card-parties and balls and splendor and illuminations; but they were to her a sort of tax assessed upon the happiness of her solitude. She, the queen of those festivities, appeared like a creature fallen to earth from some unknown world. Her innocence, which nothing had impaired,

her beautiful purity of mind, which the new habits of her new life restored to her, her loveliness, her true modesty, won for her sincere homage. But, as she saw few women in her salons, she understood that, if her husband were following a new plan of operations without communicating it to her, he had as yet made no progress in winning the esteem of society.

Diard was not always lucky; in three years, he squandered three-fourths of his fortune; but his passion gave him the necessary energy to gratify it. He had formed intimacies with many people, especially with the majority of those roués of the Bourse, those men who, since the Revolution, have established the principle that thieving on a grand scale is only a *peccadillo*, thus applying to strong-boxes the audacious maxims adopted by the eighteenth century with reference to love. Diard became a man of business, and involved in what are called in courthouse slang *wormy* affairs. He would buy from poor devils, who were unacquainted with the bureaux, claims against insolvent debtors whose affairs were dragging endlessly along, collect them in a single evening, and divide his profits with the assignees. And when the supply of debts of that nature was exhausted, he would look about for unliquidated debts, and unearth, in European, American, or barbarous states, lapsed claims, which he would succeed in reviving. When the Restoration had wiped out the debts of the princes, the Republic, and the Empire, he obtained commissions upon loans,

upon canals, and public enterprises of every sort. In short, he practised that decent form of robbery which has been taken up by so many men cleverly masked, or hidden in the wings of the political theatre; robbery which, if committed in the street, by the light of a lantern, would send a poor devil to the galleys, but which is justified by gilt cornices and candelabra. Diard monopolized and sold sugars, he sold offices, he had the honor of inventing the *man of straw* to fill lucrative offices, which it was necessary to hold for a certain time before obtaining others. Then he turned his thoughts to bounties, he studied to find defects in the laws, he carried on a contraband trade within the law. To describe in a word this exalted occupation, he demanded *so much per cent* on the purchase of the fifteen legislative votes which passed in the space of one night from the benches of the Left to those of the Right. That sort of thing is no longer robbery, or a crime at all; it is carrying on the government, becoming a silent partner in the national industry, it shows a clever head for finances. Diard was relegated by public opinion to the bench of infamy, where more than one shrewd man had sat before him. There the aristocracy of evil is to be found. It is the Upper Chamber of fashionable knaves. Diard was not simply a vulgar gambler whom the drama represents as an ignoble wretch who ends by begging. That class of gambler does not exist in society above a certain level. To-day, those audacious rascals die brilliantly, harnessed to vice and with the trappings of wealth.

They take flight to blow out their brains in their carriages, and carry with them all that they have been able to obtain on credit. Diard was shrewd enough at all events not to purchase his remorse at a discount, and he became one of those privileged men. Having made himself familiar with all the springs that moved the government, all the secrets and passions of the men in office, he was able to hold his position in the red-hot furnace into which he had thrown himself.

Madame Diard knew nothing of the infernal life her husband was leading. Content with the solitude in which he left her, she was not surprised at it at first, because all her hours were fully occupied. She had devoted her funds to the education of her children, to pay a very efficient tutor, and all the masters necessary for their thorough instruction; she wished to make men of them, to strengthen their reasoning powers without impairing their imaginations; having no sensations except through them, she no longer suffered on account of the dulness of her life; they were to her what children are for a long while to many mothers, a sort of prolongation of their lives. Diard was no longer anything more than an accident; and since Diard had ceased to be the father, the head of the family, Juana was bound to him only by the necessity imposed upon husbands and wives of keeping up appearances. Nevertheless, she brought up her children in the utmost respect for the paternal power, imaginary as it was to them; but very fortunately she was seconded by her husband's constant absence. If Diard had remained at

home, he would have nullified Juana's efforts. Her children were already too shrewd and discerning not to judge their father. To judge one's father is moral parricide. Eventually, however, Juana's indifference for her husband wore away. Her primitive lack of feeling changed to terror. The day came when she realized that a father's conduct may bear heavily for a long time on the future of his children, and her maternal love sometimes revealed the truth to her imperfectly. From day to day, the apprehension of that unknown but inevitable disaster which had been a part of her life so long, became keener and more painful. And so, during the rare moments when she and Diard were together, she cast upon his worn face, made haggard by sleepless nights, wrinkled by emotion, a piercing glance, whose searching power almost made him tremble. At such moments, the artificial gayety assumed by her husband alarmed her even more than the gloomy anxiety of his expression when, by chance, he forgot his rôle of cheerfulness. He feared his wife as the criminal fears the executioner. Juana saw in him the shame of her children; and Diard dreaded in her the calm vengeance, a species of justice with placid brow, and with arm always raised, always ready to strike.

After fifteen years of married life, Diard one day found himself penniless. He owed three hundred thousand francs, and possessed barely one hundred thousand. His house, his only visible property, was mortgaged for an amount exceeding its value.

A few days more and the prestige with which wealth had clothed him would vanish. After those days of grace, not a hand would be held out to him, not a purse would be open to him. Then, unless affairs should take a favorable turn, he must inevitably fall into the mire of contempt, lower, perhaps, than he deserved, for the very reason that he had maintained himself at an undue height. Fortunately, he learned that, during the season for taking the waters, there were, among the visitors at the resorts in the Pyrenees, several foreigners of distinction, diplomatists, all of whom were inveterate, daring gamblers, and doubtless were well supplied with money. He at once determined to start for the Pyrenees. But he did not wish to leave his wife in Paris, lest some of his creditors might disclose to her the ghastly mystery of his situation, so he took her along with the two children, refusing to allow the tutor to be of the party. He took with him only one servant, and could hardly be induced to allow Juana a maid. His manner had become abrupt and imperative, he seemed to have recovered some of his former energy. This sudden journey, the motive for which eluded Juana's penetration, froze her blood with secret alarm. Her husband was very cheerful during the journey, and during their enforced companionship in the travelling-carriage, the father seemed each day more attentive to the children and more amiable to their mother. Nevertheless, each day brought Juana sinister forebodings, the forebodings of mothers, who tremble without

apparent reason, but who are rarely mistaken when they tremble so. The veil that conceals the future seems to be less dense for them.

At Bordeaux, Diard hired a small house, very neatly furnished, on a quiet street, and installed his wife there. The house happened to stand on a corner, and had a large garden. It adjoined the next house only on one side, so that it was exposed to view and accessible on three sides. Diard paid the rent, and allowed Juana only so much money as was absolutely necessary for the household expenses for three months: he gave her barely fifty louis. Madame Diard made no comments upon this unusual niggardliness. When her husband told her that he was going to the waters, and that she was to remain at Bordeaux, Juana conceived the plan of perfecting her children in Spanish and Italian, and of reading with them the principal masterpieces in those two languages. She prepared, therefore, to lead a retired, simple, and necessarily economical life. To spare herself the burdens of housekeeping, on the day after Diard's departure, she arranged with the keeper of a cookshop to supply her meals. Her maid was the only servant she needed, and she was left without money, but with all her wants provided for until her husband's return. Her only diversion consisted in walking out with her children. She was at this time thirty-three years old. Her beauty had developed wonderfully, and was resplendent in its magnificence. So that, when she appeared in public, the fair Spaniard was the one topic of conversation

in Bordeaux. After the first love-letter that she received, Juana ceased to walk outside her garden.

At first, Diard made a fortune at the waters; he won three hundred thousand francs in two months, and did not think of sending money to his wife; he wished to keep a large sum so that he could play still higher. At the end of the third month, the Marquis de Montefiore arrived at the waters, preceded by reports of his wealth, his handsome face, and his fortunate marriage with an illustrious Englishwoman, and, more than all, by his liking for play. Diard, his former comrade, determined to await his coming, with the purpose of adding his spoils to those of all the others. A gambler provided with about four hundred thousand francs is always in a position in which he governs events to suit his inclinations, and Diard, relying upon his vein of luck, renewed his acquaintance with Montefiore. That gentleman received him coolly, but they played, and Diard lost all that he possessed.

"My dear Montefiore," said the ex-quartermaster, after making the circuit of the salon, when his ruin was complete, "I owe you a hundred thousand francs; but my money is at Bordeaux, where I left my wife."

Diard actually had the hundred bank-notes in his pocket; but with the self-possession and the swift decision of a man accustomed to twist everything into an expedient, he still clung to his hope in the inexplicable caprices of the gaming-table. Montefiore had expressed a purpose of visiting Bordeaux.

If he paid his debt, Diard would have no money, and could not demand his revenge; and an opportunity for revenge often recoups all previous losses. Nevertheless, those ardent hopes depended on the marquis's reply.

"Wait, my dear fellow," said Montefiore, "we will go to Bordeaux together. In all conscience, I am rich enough to-day not to want to take an old comrade's money."

Three days later, Diard and the Italian were at Bordeaux. The latter offered the other his revenge. Now, in a single evening, which Diard began by paying over his hundred thousand francs, he lost two hundred more upon his word. The Provençal was as gay as a man accustomed to take baths of gold. The clock had just struck eleven, the weather was superb; Montefiore felt no less than Diard the need of a walk in the fresh air to recover from their excitement. Diard proposed that he should come home with him to get his money and take a cup of tea.

"But Madame Diard?" queried Montefiore.

"Pshaw!" said the Provençal.

They went downstairs; but, before taking his hat, Diard went into the dining-room of the hotel in which they were, and asked for a glass of water; while they were bringing it, he walked back and forth, and succeeded in obtaining possession, without being seen, of one of those tiny steel knives, with a sharp point and a mother-of-pearl handle, which are used to cut fruit at dessert, and which had not been put away.

"Where do you live?" Montefiore asked him in

the courtyard. "I must send my carriage to your door."

Diard told him, and truly, where his house was.

"You understand," said Montefiore, in a low tone, taking his arm, "that, so long as I am with you, I have nothing to fear; but, if I were to return alone, and some villain should follow me, I should be well worth killing."

"Why, how much have you about you?"

"Oh! almost nothing," replied the suspicious Italian. "I have only my winnings. But they would make a pretty little fortune for a beggar, who would certainly have a good claim to the title of honest man for the rest of his days."

Diard led the Italian through a deserted street where he had noticed a house with a gate at the end of an avenue lined with trees and bordered by high, dark walls. When they reached that spot, he had the hardihood to request Montefiore to go first in military fashion. Montefiore understood him, and insisted upon walking beside him. Thereupon, as soon as they had both stepped foot in the avenue, Diard, with the agility of a tiger, leaped upon the marquis and threw him down with a clever turn of the leg against the back of his knees, planted his foot boldly upon his throat, and plunged the knife again and again into his heart, where the blade finally broke. Then he searched Montefiore, took wallet, money, everything. Although Diard went about his work with lucid ferocity, with the dexterity of a pickpocket; although he had taken Montefiore by surprise very

adroitly, the Italian had had time to cry out: "Murder! murder!" in a clear, piercing voice, calculated to stir the entrails of the soundest sleepers. His last breaths were horrible shrieks. Diard did not know that, just as they entered the avenue, a multitude of people just out from the theatres, where the performances were at an end, were passing the end of the street and heard the dying man's death-rattle, though the Provençal tried to stifle the voice by pressing more heavily with his foot upon Montefiore's throat, thereby causing his shrieks to cease gradually. The people began to run toward the avenue, where the high walls, repeating the cries, indicated the exact spot where the crime was being committed. Their steps rang in Diard's brain. But, still retaining his presence of mind, the assassin left the avenue and went out into the street, walking very slowly like a bystander who had discovered that assistance was of no avail. He even turned to estimate the distance between himself and those who were approaching and saw them rush into the avenue, with the exception of one man, who, with very natural precaution, set himself to watch Diard.

"That's the man! that's the man!" cried those who had entered the avenue, when they saw Montefiore stretched on the ground and the door of the house closed, and when they had searched all about without finding the assassin.

As soon as those shouts arose, Diard, feeling that he had a fair start, displayed the strength of the lion and the speed of the stag; he began to run, or rather

to fly. At the other end of the street, he saw, or thought that he saw, a crowd of people, whereupon he plunged into a cross-street. But all the windows were already open, and at every window faces appeared; from every door came shouts, and rays of light. And Diard ran on, without turning to right or left, amid the lights and the uproar; but his legs were so nimble and active that he outstripped the clamor, although he could not escape the eyes which embraced the ground over which he was running faster than he could cover it. Inhabitants, soldiers, gendarmes, everybody in the neighborhood was on the alert in a twinkling. Some zealous ones awoke the officials, others watched the body. The clamor moved rapidly, both toward the fugitive who drew it after him like the flame of a conflagration, and toward the centre of the city where the magistrates were. Diard had all the sensations of a dream, hearing a whole city shouting and running and shuddering thus. Meanwhile, he still retained his faculties and his presence of mind: he wiped his hands on the walls as he ran. At last, he reached the garden-wall of his own house. He believed that he had thrown his pursuers off the scent, for he found himself surrounded by perfect silence, although he could still hear in the distance the uproar in the city, like the muttering of the sea. He took some water from a brook and drank it. Noticing a heap of discarded stones, he hid his treasure there, guided by one of those vague thoughts which come to criminals when, having no longer the power to estimate the effect of

their acts taken as a whole, they seek hurriedly to establish their innocence on the basis of lack of proof. That done, he strove to assume a calm expression, tried to summon a smile, and knocked softly at the door of his house, hoping that no one had seen him. He raised his eyes and saw, streaming through the blinds, the light of the candles in his wife's bedroom. Thereupon, in the midst of his anxiety, the thought of Juana's peaceful life, sitting between her sons, smote his brain as if he had been struck on the head with a hammer. The maid opened the door, which Diard hastily closed behind him with his foot. At that moment, he breathed freely; but he noticed that he was wet with perspiration, so he remained in the shadow and sent the maid to Juana. He wiped his face with his handkerchief, put his clothes in order like a fop who smoothes the wrinkles from his coat before entering the presence of a pretty woman; then he went and stood in the moonlight to look at his hands and feel his face; he felt a thrill of joy when he discovered that there were no blood-stains upon him; evidently his victim had died of internal hemorrhage. But that criminal's toilet took some time. He went up to Juana's room with a manner as calm and composed as that of a man returning home after the play. As he ascended the stairs, he was able to reflect upon his position and to summarize it in two words: he must leave the house and find his way to the harbor. He did not think that thought, he saw it written in letters of fire in the darkness. Let him once get to the harbor and he would hide

during the day and return at night for his treasure; then he would stow himself away, like a rat, in the hold of some vessel and leave France without anyone suspecting where he was. To accomplish all that, he needed money before everything! And he had nothing. The maid came to light him into the room.

"Don't you hear noises, shouts in the street, Félicie?" he said. "Go and find out what they mean; then come back and tell me."

His wife, in her white night-robe, was sitting at a table, reading from a Spanish copy of Cervantes to Francisque and Juan, who followed the text while she pronounced it in a clear, distinct voice. All three of them stopped and glanced at Diard, who remained standing, with his hands thrust in his pockets, astonished, perhaps, to find himself in the calm atmosphere and soft light of that scene, embellished by the figures of that woman and those two children. It was a living picture of the Virgin between her Son and Saint John.

"I have something to tell you, Juana."

"What is it?" she asked, divining beneath her husband's sickly pallor the disaster that she had expected day after day.

"Oh! it's nothing; but I would like to speak to you—to you yourself—alone."

He gazed vacantly at his two sons.

"Go to your room, my darlings, and go to bed," said Juana. "Say your prayers without me."

The two boys went silently from the room with the uninquisitive obedience of well-bred children.

"My dear Juana," continued Diard, in a cajoling tone, "I left you very little money, and I am in despair now because I did not leave you more. Tell me, since I relieved you of the cares of housekeeping and gave you an allowance, haven't you saved a little, as all women do?"

"No," Juana replied, "I have nothing. You did not allow for the cost of your children's education. I do not mean to reproach you, my dear, and I remind you of that omission only to explain my lack of money. All that you have given me I have used to pay their masters."

"Enough!" cried Diard, abruptly. "Heavens and earth! time is precious. Have you no jewels?"

"You know that I have never worn any."

"So there is not a sou here!" cried Diard, frantically.

"Why do you shout so?" said she.

"Juana, I have just killed a man!"

Juana rushed toward her children's room, and returned after closing all the doors.

"Do not let your sons hear," she said. "Who was the man with whom you fought?"

"Montefiore," he replied.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, with a sigh, "he is the only man you had the right to kill."

"There were many reasons why he should die by my hand. But let us not waste time! Money, money, money, in God's name! I may be pursued. We did not fight, I—killed him."

"Killed him!" she cried. "How?"

"Why, as men kill; he had stolen my whole fortune from me at cards; I took it back. While everything is quiet, Juana, as we have no money, you had better go and look for mine under that heap of stones that you know of, at the end of the street."

"Heaven help me!" said Juana, "you robbed him."

"What difference does that make to you? I must go, must I not? Have you any money?—They are on my tracks!"

"Who?"

"The officers."

Juana left the room, and returned in an instant.

"Here," she said, holding out a trinket at arm's length, "here is Donna Lagounia's cross. There are four rubies of great value, so I have been told. Go, go, go—go, I say!"

"Félicie does not return," he said, stupid with terror. "Can she be arrested?"

Juana left the cross on the edge of the table, and darted to the windows looking into the street. There she saw, by the moonlight, soldiers taking their places along the walls in absolute silence. She returned, struggling to be calm, and said to her husband:

"You have not a moment to lose, you must fly through the garden. Here is the key to the small gate."

As a matter of precaution, however, she went and looked into the garden. In the darkness, under the trees, she saw the gleam of the silver braid

on the rims of the gendarmes' hats. She heard, too, the vague muttering of the people, drawn thither by curiosity, but held back by sentries at the ends of the various streets through which they had come. Diard had been seen by people at their windows; and, following their directions and those of his servant, who had been first frightened, then arrested, the troops and the people had guarded the streets at the junction of which the house was situated. A dozen or more gendarmes, returning from the theatre, had surrounded the house, while others climbed the walls and searched the garden, justified by the heinousness of the crime.

"Monsieur," said Juana, "you cannot escape. The whole city is here."

Diard rushed to the window with the frantic activity of a caged bird beating its head against the bars. Juana stood lost in thought.

"Where can I hide?" he said.

He glanced at the fireplace, and Juana looked at the two empty chairs. For a moment, it had seemed to her that her children were there. At that moment, the gate leading from the street was thrown open and the tread of many feet was heard in the courtyard.

"Juana, dear Juana, for God's sake, advise me."

"I will advise you," she said, "and save you."

"Ah! you will be my good angel."

Juana returned, handed Diard one of his pistols, and turned her head away. Diard did not take the pistol. Juana heard the noise in the courtyard,

whither they had brought the marquis's body to confront the assassin with it; she turned and saw Diard standing there, pale and trembling. He felt himself at the point of fainting, and essayed to sit down.

"Your children implore you to do it," she said, putting the weapon in his hand.

"But, my dear Juana, my darling Juana, do you think that? Is there need of such haste, Juana?—I would like to kiss you—"

The gendarmes were coming upstairs. Thereupon Juana took the pistol, covered Diard with it, held him firmly by the throat despite his shrieks, shot him through the head, and threw the weapon on the floor.

At that moment, the door flew open. The king's attorney, followed by a magistrate, a doctor, a clerk, gendarmes—in a word, all the instruments of human justice appeared on the threshold.

"What do you want?" said she.

"Is that Monsieur Diard?" replied the king's attorney, pointing to the body which lay doubled up on the floor.

"Yes, monsieur!"

"Your dress is covered with blood, madame."

"Do you not understand why?" said Juana.

She sat down at the little table and took up the volume of Cervantes, and, pale as death, struggled to restrain her intense nervous excitement.

"Leave the room," said the magistrate to the gendarmes.

Then he made a sign to the examining magistrate and the doctor, who remained.

"Madame, we can only congratulate you on your husband's death, under existing circumstances. If he allowed himself to be carried away by passion, he has, at all events, died a soldier's death, and rendered useless the interposition of the law. But, much as we regret to disturb you at such a moment, the law compels us to report every violent death. Permit us to do our duty."

"May I go and change my dress?" she asked, placing the book on the table.

"Yes, madame, but you will bring it back here. The doctor will undoubtedly need it."

"It would be too painful for madame to see and hear me operate," said the physician, who understood the magistrate's suspicions. "Pray, allow her to remain in the next room, messieurs."

The magistrate approved the kind-hearted doctor's suggestion, and Félicie went to attend her mistress. The king's attorney and the examining magistrate talked together in undertones. Magistrates are very unfortunate to be obliged to suspect everybody, and to consider every possible contingency. By dint of assuming evil intentions and inventing causes for them, all for the purpose of arriving at truths hidden beneath the most contradictory actions, it is impossible that their unpleasant profession should not eventually dry up the fountain of generous emotions which they are compelled to look upon with suspicion. If the sensibilities of the surgeon, who goes

about prying into the mysteries of the body, end by becoming blunted, what becomes of the conscience of the magistrate who is constantly compelled to pry into the recesses of the soul? The earliest martyrs of their mission, magistrates are always in mourning for their lost illusions, and crime weighs no less heavily upon them than upon criminals. An old man seated on the magistrate's bench is sublime, but it makes one shudder to think of a young judge! Now, the magistrate in question was young, and he felt called upon to say to the king's attorney:

"Do you believe that the wife was the husband's accomplice? Must we institute proceedings against her? Do you think she should be questioned?"

The king's attorney answered with a careless shrug.

"Montefiore and Diard," he said, "were two well-known rascals. The maid knew nothing about the crime. Let us stop there."

The surgeon performed an autopsy upon Diard's body and dictated his report to the clerk. Suddenly he darted into Juana's room.

"Madame—"

Juana, having changed her blood-stained dress, came to meet him.

"You killed your husband, did you not?" he said, putting his mouth to the Spaniard's ear.

"Yes, monsieur."

"*And from all these facts taken together*," said the doctor, continuing his dictation, "*we conclude that*

the said Diard voluntarily and knowingly killed himself.—Have you finished?" he asked the clerk, after a pause.

"Yes," was the reply.

The doctor signed the report. Juana glanced up at him, with difficulty restraining the tears that momentarily dimmed her eyes.

"Messieurs," she said, "I am a foreigner, a Spaniard. I know nothing of the laws, I know nobody in Bordeaux, so I venture to ask a favor of you. Procure for me a passport to Spain."

"One moment!" cried the examining magistrate. "What has become of the money stolen from the Marquis de Montefiore, madame?"

"Monsieur Diard," she replied, "spoke vaguely of having hidden it under a pile of stones."

"Where?"

"In the street."

The two magistrates glanced at each other. Juana made a sublime gesture and beckoned to the doctor.

"Monsieur," she whispered, "can it be that I am suspected of participation in this infamy? The heap of stones is at the end of my garden. Go there yourself, I beg you. Look about, search, and find that money."

The doctor went out, taking the examining magistrate with him, and they found Montefiore's wallet.

Two days later, Juana sold her gold cross to provide for the expenses of her journey. As she was walking with her children to the diligence that was to take them to the Spanish frontier, she heard

someone call her name in the street. Her mother, at the point of death, was being taken to the hospital; and she had spied her daughter through the opening of the curtains of the litter in which they were carrying her. Juana bade the bearers take the litter under a *porte cochère*. There the last interview between the mother and the daughter took place. Although both of them spoke in low tones, Juan heard these parting words:

"Die in peace, mother, I have suffered for you all!"

Paris, November 1832.

A SEASHORE DRAMA

TO MADAME LA PRINCESSE CAROLINE GALITZIN DE GENTHOD, NÉE COMTESSE WALEWSKA

As a mark of homage and respectful remembrance from the author.

*

Young people almost always have a pair of compasses with which they amuse themselves by measuring the future; when their determination is proportionate to the angle at which they open them, the world is theirs. But this phenomenon of mental life is witnessed only at a certain age. That age, which in all men is between twenty-two and twenty-eight, is the age of noble thoughts, the age of first conceptions, because it is the age of great desires, the age at which one has no doubts: he who says doubt, says helplessness. After that age, which passes as rapidly as the season for sowing, comes the age of execution. There are, in a certain sense, two periods of youth: the youth during which men believe, the youth during which men act; the two are often blended in men whom nature has favored, and who are, like Cæsar, Newton, and Bonaparte, the greatest of great men.

I was measuring the length of time required by a thought to attain its full development, and standing, compass in hand, upon a cliff, one hundred fathoms above the ocean, whose waves were playing among the reefs at my feet, I plotted out my future, dotting it with works, as an engineer traces fortresses and palaces upon an unoccupied tract of land. The sea was beautiful; I had just dressed myself after a swim; I was waiting for Pauline, my guardian angel,

who was bathing in a granite basin with a floor of white sand, the daintiest bath-tub ever designed by Nature for her sea-nymphs. We were at the extreme end of Le Croisic, a tiny peninsula of Bretagne; we were far from the harbor, in a spot deemed so nearly inaccessible by the treasury officials, that the revenue officers hardly ever pass that way. To swim in the air after swimming in the sea! Ah! who would not have swum away into the future? Why was I thinking? Why do misfortunes happen? Who knows? Ideas fall into your heart or your brain without consulting you. Never was courtesan more capricious or more imperious than is conception in the mind of artists; one must grasp it, like fortune, by the hair, when it appears. Clinging to my thought, as Astolfo clung to his hippogriff, I was riding through the world, arranging everything to suit myself. As I looked about me in quest of some omen favorable to the success of the rash enterprises my insane imagination advised me to undertake, a melodious cry, the cry of a woman calling you in the silence of a desert, the cry of a woman coming from the bath, refreshed and light of heart, rose above the murmur of the restless, fringed waves that marked the ebb and flow of the tide along the indented shore. When I heard that note gushing from the heart, I fancied that I saw, among the cliffs, the foot of an angel, who cried, as she spread her wings: "Thou wilt succeed!" I descended the cliff, light-footed, radiant with joy; I descended with leaps and bounds

like a stone thrown down a steep incline. When she saw me, she said: "What is the matter?" I did not reply, my eyes were moist. The night before, Pauline had understood my sorrow, as she now understood my joy, with the magic sensitiveness of a harp that obeys the variations of the atmosphere. The life of man has some blissful moments! We walked in silence along the shore. The sky was cloudless, the sea without a ripple; others would have seen naught but two blue prairies, one resting upon the other; but we, we who understood each other without need of speech, we who could watch, between those two swaddling-bands of infinity, the play of the illusions upon which youth feeds, we pressed each other's hands at the slightest change either in the broad expanse of water or in the broad expanse of air, for we took those slight phenomena for material translations of our twofold thought. Who has not experienced, in his pleasures, that moment of boundless joy, when the soul seems to have thrown off the bondage of the flesh, and to be, as it were, restored to the world from which it came? Pleasure is not our only guide in those regions. There are times when the sentiments become interlaced and dart away thither, as two children take each other by the hand and begin to run, without knowing why. We were walking in that way.

Just as the roofs of the town appeared on the horizon in a grayish line, we met a poor fisherman returning to Le Croisic; his feet were bare, his

cotton trousers were frayed at the bottom, torn and badly mended; he wore a shirt of sail-canvas, wretched list suspenders, and for a jacket a mere rag. Such poverty affected us unpleasantly, like a discordant note in the midst of our harmonious sensations. We glanced at each other to express our common regret that we had not the power at that moment to draw upon the treasures of Aboul-Cacem. We spied a magnificent lobster and a crab fastened to a small cord, which the fisherman held in his right hand, while in the other he carried his nets and tackle. We accosted him, with the intention of buying his catch, an idea which occurred to us both, and was expressed by a smile, to which I replied with a slight pressure of the arm which I held and which I pressed against my heart. It was one of those trifles which the memory later transfigures into poems, when, as we sit by the fire, we recall the time when that trifle moved us deeply, the place where it happened, and that mirage, the effects of which have not as yet been definitely determined, but which often changes the aspect of the objects that surround us when life runs smoothly and our hearts are full. The loveliest spots are simply what we make them. What man, with ever so little poetry in his veins, has not among his memories a block of granite that occupies more space there than the most celebrated landscapes of countries visited at great expense? Beside that rock, what tumultuous thoughts we have had! there a whole life was mapped out; there fears were banished; there gleams

of hope found their way into the heart. At a certain moment, the sun, sympathizing with our thoughts of love or of the future, cast upon its tawny side a radiant beam; a few mountain flowers attracted the eye; the tranquillity and silence heightened the effect of that uneven surface, dark in reality, but clothed in brilliant colors by the dreamer; at such times, it was beautiful, with its sparse vegetation, its pungent camomile, its velvet-leaved maidenhair. A prolonged fête, superb decorations, blissful exaltation of human forces! Once before, the Lac de Bienne, as seen from Ile Saint-Pierre, had spoken thus to me; perhaps the cliff of Le Croisic will be the last of such joys for me. But, in that case, what will become of Pauline?

"You had good luck this morning, had you not, my goodman?" I asked the fisherman.

"Yes, monsieur," he replied, stopping and turning upon us the tanned face of those who are exposed for many hours at a time to the reflection of the sun from the water.

That face indicated endless resignation, the patience of the fisherman, and his peaceful habits. The man had a voice with no trace of harshness, well-formed lips, no ambition, and an indefinable look of illness and lack of force. Any other face would have been offensive to us.

"Where are you going to sell your catch?"

"In the town."

"How much will they pay you for the lobster?"

"Fifteen sous."

"For the crab?"

"Twenty sous."

"Why so much difference between the lobster and the crab?"

"The crab is much more delicate, monsieur! Then they're as cunning as monkeys, and it's very hard to catch them."

"Will you sell us the whole lot for a hundred sous?" said Pauline.

The man was petrified.

"You shall not have it!" I said, laughingly. "I will give ten francs. You must learn to pay what emotions are worth, if you want to buy them."

"Very well," she retorted, "I will have it! I give ten francs, two sous."

"Ten sous."

"Twelve francs."

"Fifteen francs."

"Fifteen francs, fifty centimes."

"A hundred francs."

"A hundred and fifty."

I bowed. We were not rich enough at that moment to carry the bidding any further. Our poor fisherman did not know whether he ought to be angry at being made a fool of, or to exult; we relieved his perplexity by giving him the name of our landlady and bidding him carry the lobster and the crab to her.

"Do you earn a living?" I asked, in order to ascertain the cause of his destitution.

"Only with much difficulty and by suffering much

hardship," he replied. "Fishing on the sea-coast, when you have no boat or nets and have to depend on the line, is a risky business. You see, you have to wait for the fish or the shell-fish, while the other fishermen go out to sea for them. It's so hard to earn a living this way, that I'm the only man who fishes on shore. Some days I don't get anything at all. The only way I can get anything is when a crab forgets himself and sleeps too long, as this one did, or a lobster is foolish enough to stay among the rocks. Sometimes the wolf-fish come ashore after high tide; then I catch them."

"Taking one day with another, how much do you earn a day?"

"Eleven or twelve sous. I could do well enough if I was alone; but I have a father to take care of, and the goodman can't help me, for he's blind."

At those words, spoken quite simply, Pauline and I looked at each other, but said nothing.

"You have a wife or some kind friend?"

He looked at us with one of the most pitiful expressions I ever saw, as he replied:

"If I had a wife, I should have to abandon my father; I couldn't take care of him and of a wife and children, too."

"Well, my poor fellow, why don't you try to earn more by carrying salt to the harbor or working in the salt-marshes?"

"Ah! monsieur, I couldn't do that work three months. I am not strong enough, and if I should die, my father would have to beg. I must have a

trade that requires only a little skill and a deal of patience."

"But how can two people live on twelve sous a day?"

"Oh! monsieur, we eat buckwheat-cakes, and barnacles that I pull off the rocks."

"How old are you, pray?"

"Thirty-seven."

"Have you ever been away from here?"

"I went to Guérande once to draw for the conscription, and I went to Savenay to show myself to the gentlemen who measured me. If I had been an inch taller, I'd have been a soldier. I should have died on the first long march, and my father would be asking alms to-day."

I had meditated many dramas; Pauline was accustomed to intense emotions, living with an invalid like myself; but neither of us had ever listened to words more affecting than those of that fisherman. We walked a few steps in silence, both attempting to measure the mute depths of that unfamiliar life, admiring the nobility of that self-sacrificing devotion which was all unconscious of itself; the strength of that weakness astounded us; that heedless generosity made us seem very small. I seemed to see the poor creature, a creature guided entirely by instinct, riveted to that rock as a galley-slave is to his ball and chain, watching for shell-fish there for twenty years, as a means of livelihood, and sustained in his patient endurance by a single sentiment. How many hours consumed on that bit

of seashore! how many hopes dashed to the ground by a squall or a change of weather! He hung from the edge of a shelf of granite, with his arm outstretched like an East Indian fakir's, while his father sat upon a stool at home, in the silence and the darkness, waiting for the coarsest of shell-fish and for bread, if such were the sea's good pleasure.

"Do you ever drink wine?" I asked him.

"Three or four times a year."

"Well, you shall drink some to-day, you and your father too, and we will send you some white bread."

"You are very kind, monsieur."

"We will give you some dinner if you choose to guide us along the shore to Batz, where we are going to see the tower that overlooks the bay and the coast between Batz and Le Croisic."

"I shall be glad to do it," he said. "Go straight ahead, following the road you are now on; I will overtake you after I have got rid of my tackle and my fish."

We simultaneously nodded our assent, and he hurried joyously away toward the town. That encounter held us in the same mental situation in which we were before, but our gayety was somewhat subdued by it.

"Poor man!" said Pauline, with the accent which takes away from a woman's compassion whatever there may be that is offensive in pity; "does it not make one ashamed to be happy after witnessing such misery?"

"Nothing is more painful than to have hopeless longings," I replied. "Those two poor creatures, father and son, will no more know how keen our sympathy has been, than the world knows how beautiful their life is, for they are laying up treasures in Heaven."

"What a wretched country!" she said, pointing to a field surrounded by a loose stone wall, with cow-dung arranged symmetrically along its whole length. "I asked what that was. A peasant-woman, who was at work laying it on the wall, informed me that she was *making wood*. Just fancy, my dear, that when that stuff is dry, these poor people collect it, pile it up, and warm themselves with it. During the winter, they sell it just as they sell lumps of peat. And what do you suppose the best-paid dressmaker earns?—Five sous a day," she said, after a pause, "but she has her board."

"Just see," I said, "the winds from the sea wither or uproot everything, there are no trees; the débris of condemned vessels is sold to the rich, for the cost of transportation evidently prevents their using firewood, which is plentiful in Bretagne. This country is beautiful only to great hearts; people without courage could not live here; it is no place for anybody but poets or barnacles. Why, the storehouse for salt had to be placed on that cliff to induce anyone to live there. On one side, the sea; here, nothing but sand; above, space."

We had already passed the town, and were crossing the species of desert which separates Le Croisic

"If you should fix your mind upon the three immensities that surround us, water, air, and sand, listening exclusively to the ceaseless sound of the ebb and flow," I replied, "you would not be able to endure its language, you would fancy that you discovered therein a thought that would depress you. Last night, at sunset, I had that sensation; it shattered my nerves."

"Oh! yes, let us talk," she said, after a long pause. "No orator could be more terrible. I fancy that I can detect the causes of the harmonies that surround us," she added. "This landscape, which has only three clearly defined colors, the bright yellow of the sand, the blue of the sky, and the smooth green of the sea, is grand without being wild, it is vast without being desert-like, it is monotonous without being fatiguing, it has only three elements, yet it is varied."

"Only women can put their impressions in words thus," I replied; "you would drive a poet to despair, dear heart, whom I have so thoroughly fathomed!"

"The fierce noonday heat imparts a devouring brilliancy to these three expressions of infinity," rejoined Pauline, with a laugh. "Here I can conceive the poetic fancies and the passions of the East."

"And I can conceive the meaning of despair."

"Yes," she said, "this dune is a sublime cloister."

We heard our guide's hurried footsteps; he had put on his best clothes. We addressed some meaningless words to him; he thought that he could see

that our frame of mind had changed, and, with the reserve that unhappiness makes natural to man, he held his peace. Although we pressed each other's hands from time to time, to assure each other of the mutuality of our ideas and impressions, we walked for half an hour without speaking, whether because we were dazed by the heat which rose in shimmering waves from the sands, or because our attention was engrossed by the difficulty of walking. We went, hand in hand, like two children; we should not have taken ten steps if we had been arm in arm. The road leading to the village of Batz was not marked; a gust of wind sufficed to wipe out the prints of horses' feet, or the ruts made by cart-wheels; but our guide's practised eye picked out the road by the droppings of horses and cattle; now it swerved toward the sea, now back again toward the mainland, at the good pleasure of the slopes, or to skirt the rocks. At noon, we were only half-way across.

"We will rest over yonder," I said, pointing to a promontory of rocks of sufficient height to lead one to suppose that there was a grotto there.

The fisherman, hearing me speak, looked in the direction in which I was pointing, shook his head, and said:

"There's someone there! People who go from Batz to Le Croisic, or from Le Croisic to Batz, always make a detour so as not to pass that place."

The man spoke in a low tone, and his words implied a mystery.

"Is he a robber, an assassin?"

Our guide's only reply was a long-drawn sigh which redoubled our curiosity.

"Will any harm come to us if we go that way?"

"Oh! no."

"Will you go with us?"

"No, monsieur."

"We will go alone, then, if you assure us that there's no danger."

"I don't say that," replied the fisherman, hastily. "I say just this, that the man who is there will say nothing to you, and do you no harm. Oh! *Mon Dieu*, he won't even move from his place."

"Who is he, pray?"

"A man!"

Never were two syllables pronounced with such a tragic intonation. At that moment, we were some twenty yards from the little headland about which the sea was playing; our guide took the road that skirted the base of the rocks; we went straight on, but Pauline took my arm. Our guide quickened his pace in order to reach the point where the two roads met as soon as we. He assumed, doubtless, that we should walk faster after we had seen the man. That circumstance fanned the flame of our curiosity, which became so intense that our hearts beat as if we were afraid. Despite the heat of the day, and the fatigue caused by walking through the sand, our minds were still enthralled by the indescribable rapture of a perfect harmony of thought; they were full of that pure pleasure which cannot be better described than by comparing it to that which one feels when listening

to lovely music, as, for example, Mozart's *Andiamo mio ben*. Two pure sentiments which meet and blend are like two beautiful voices singing. In order to appreciate fully the emotion that seized upon us, one must realize the semi-voluptuous state which the events of that morning had caused in us. You gaze long in admiration at a turtle-dove with his pretty coat, swaying upon a slender twig beside a stream; you will utter a cry of pain when you see a hawk swoop down upon it, bury its steel claws in its heart, and bear it away with the lightning-like rapidity that powder communicates to the bullet. When we stepped upon the open space in front of the grotto,—a sort of platform a hundred feet above the ocean, and protected from its fury by a wall of steep rocks,—we felt an electric thrill like the shock caused by a sudden noise in the silence of the night. We had caught sight of a man sitting on a block of granite,—a man who looked at us. His glance shot like the flame of a cannon, from two eyes injected with blood, and his stoical immobility could be compared only to the unchangeable attitude of the piles of granite which surrounded him. His eyes moved slowly, his body remained stationary, as if it had been turned to stone. After he had flashed that glance upon us, which gave us a violent shock, he turned his gaze again upon the vast expanse of the ocean, and looked steadily at it, notwithstanding the dazzling reflection, as eagles are said to look at the sun, without lowering his eyelids, which he did not raise again to look at us. Try to recall, my dear

uncle, one of those venerable oaks, whose gnarled trunk, recently stripped of its branches, rises fantastically upon a deserted road, and you will have a faithful image of that man. He had a shattered herculean frame, the face of Olympian Jove, but seamed by age, by the hard toil of a seafaring life, by grief, by coarse food, and blackened as if by a stroke of lightning. As I glanced at his rough, hairy hands, I saw cords that resembled veins of iron. Everything about him indicated a rugged constitution. I noticed in a corner of the grotto a considerable quantity of moss, and upon a rough table hewn out by hazard in the midst of the granite, part of a round loaf placed upon an earthen jug. Never had my imagination, going back to the deserts where the first Christian hermits dwelt, conceived a more grandly religious, a more appallingly repentant face than that man's. I doubt if even you, my dear uncle, who have sat in the confessional, have ever come in contact with such whole-souled remorse; but that remorse was drowned in the waves of prayer, the unceasing prayer of a mute despair. That fisherman, that seaman, that rough Breton, was sublime by virtue of an unknown sentiment. But had those eyes wept? Had that hand, the hand of an unfinished statue, ever struck? Was that stern brow, which bore the stamp of savage uprightness, and upon which, nevertheless, strength had left the traces of that gentleness which is a part of all genuine strength,—was that brow, furrowed with wrinkles, in harmony with a noble heart? Why

was that man in the granite? Why was the granite in that man? Which was the man? which was the granite? A whole world of thoughts crowded into our brains. As our guide had foreseen, we passed on in silence, rapidly, and he saw that we were excited by fear or speechless with amazement; but he did not taunt us with the accuracy of his predictions.

"Did you see him?" he asked.

"Who is that man?" I rejoined.

"He is called the *Man of the Vow.*"

You can imagine how swiftly our heads turned toward our fisherman at those words! He was a simple fellow; he understood our mute question, and this is what he told us in his own language, of which I will try to preserve the popular flavor.

"Madame, they of Le Croisic, like they of Batz, believe that that man is guilty of something, and that he is doing a penance ordered by a famous pastor to whom he went to confess, away beyond Nantes. Others think that Cambremer—that is his name—has an evil spell which he lays upon everyone who passes through his air. So that many people, before skirting his rock, look to see from what quarter the wind is coming. If it is from the northwest," he said, pointing in that direction, "they would not go on even if they were going in search of a bit of the true Cross, they turn about, they are afraid. Others, the rich folk of Le Croisic, say that Cambremer has made a vow, whence his name of the Man of the Vow. He is there night and day, without ever leaving the place. These reports have

an appearance of sense. You see," he added, turning to call our attention to a thing we had not noticed, "he has planted a wooden cross there, at the left, to signify that he has placed himself under the protection of God, the Virgin, and the Saints. He wouldn't have consecrated himself like that if it hadn't been that everybody is so afraid of him that he's as safe there as if he was guarded by troops. He hasn't said a word since he shut himself up in the open air; he lives on bread and water, which his brother's daughter carries him every morning, a little maid of twelve, to whom he has left his property; and a pretty creature she is, gentle as a lamb, a very sweet little girl, very bright! She has eyes *as long as that*," he said, pointing to his thumb, "under a cherub's head of hair. When anyone asks her: 'Say, Pérotte'— That means Pierrette with us," he said, interrupting himself; "she is vowed to Saint-Pierre, Cambremer's name is Pierre, and he was her godfather.—'Say, Pérotte, what does your uncle say to you?'—'He don't say nothing,' she will answer, 'nothing at all, nothing.'—'Well, what does he do to you?'—'He kisses me on the forehead of a Sunday.'—'Aren't you afraid of him?'—'Oh! nonsense,' she says, 'he's my godfather.'—He wouldn't have anybody else bring him his food. Pérotte says he smiles when she comes, as much as to say she's a sunbeam in the fog, for they say his brain's as thick as fog."

"But you excite our curiosity without satisfying it," I said to him. "Do you know what made him

THE MAN OF THE VOW

After he had flashed that glance upon us, which gave us a violent shock, he turned his gaze again upon the vast expanse of the ocean, and looked steadily at it, notwithstanding the dazzling reflection, as eagles are said to look at the sun, without lowering his eyelids, which he did not raise again to look at us.

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go there? was it sorrow, was it repentance, was it insanity, was it a crime, was it—?"

"Well, monsieur, my father and I are about the only ones that know the truth of the story. My mother, who's dead, worked for a man of the law to whom Cambremer told the whole story by the priest's order; he wouldn't give him absolution unless he did it, so the people at the harbor say. My poor mother heard Cambremer without meaning to, because the judge's kitchen was alongside his study, and she listened! She's dead; the judge who heard him is dead, too. My mother made us promise, my father and me, never to lisp a word to the people hereabout, but I can tell you that the night mother told us about it my hair shrivelled up on my head."

"Well, tell us about it, my good fellow; we will never mention it to anyone."

The fisherman looked at us, and continued thus:

"Pierre Cambremer, whom you saw up yonder, is the oldest of the Cambremers, who have followed the sea from father to son; their name tells the story,—the sea has always bent under them.* The man you saw had got to be a boat fisherman. He had boats, and went after sardines; he fished for deep-water fish, too, for the dealers. He would have fitted out a vessel and taken to the cod fishing, if he hadn't been so fond of his wife, who was a fine woman, a Brouin of Guérande, a splendid girl and with a good heart. She was so fond of Cambremer that she would never let him leave her for any longer time than

* *Cambrer*—to bend.

was necessary for the sardine fishing. They lived yonder, look!" said the fisherman, mounting a slight eminence to point to an islet in the small inland sea which lies between the dunes among which we were walking and the salt-marshes of Guérande; "do you see that house? it was his. Jacquette Brouin and Cambremer never had but one child, a boy, and they loved him like—what shall I say? *dame!* as one loves an only child: they were mad over him. If their little Jacques had dirted in the saucepan, saving your presence, they would have said it was sugar. How many times we have seen them on market-days, buying the prettiest gewgaws for him! It was out of all reason—everybody told them so. Little Cambremer, seeing that he was allowed to do anything, became as wicked as a red ass. When somebody went to Père Cambremer and told him: 'Your son nearly killed little So-and-so,' he laughed, and said: 'Bah! he'll make a fine sailor! he'll command the king's fleets.' And when another said: 'Pierre Cambremer, do you know that your son has put out the little Pougaud girl's eye?' he replied: 'He will be fond of the girls!'—He thought that all he did was right. And so my little rascal, at ten years of age, cudgelled everybody, and amused himself by cutting off chickens' heads; he would cut them open, too,—in short, he rolled in blood like a polecat.—'He will be a famous soldier,' said Cambremer, 'he has a taste for blood.'—You see, I remembered all that," said the fisherman. "And so did Cambremer," he added, after a pause. "At fifteen or

sixteen, Jacques Cambremer was—a regular shark! He went to Guérande for amusement, to play the spark at Savenay. He needed money. So he began to steal from his mother, who didn't dare tell her husband. Cambremer was so honest that he would travel twenty leagues to return two sous to a man who had overpaid him in settling an account. At last, one day, the mother was stripped of everything. While his father was away fishing, the boy carried away the buffet, the crockery, the bedclothes, the linen, and left only the four walls. He had sold everything to go and run riot at Nantes. The poor woman wept for days and nights. She must tell that to the father, when he returned; she was afraid of the father, not for herself, you may be sure! When Pierre Cambremer returned and found his house furnished with things his wife had borrowed, he said:

"'What's all this?'

"The poor woman was more dead than alive.

"'We've been robbed,' she said.

"'Where is Jacques?'

"'Jacques is *on a spree!*'

"No one knew where the villain had gone.

"'He amuses himself too much!' said Pierre.

"Six months later, the poor father learned that his son was in danger of falling into the hands of the law at Nantes. He made the journey on foot, got there sooner than he could have done by sea, put his hand on his son, and brought him back here. He didn't ask him: 'What have you done?' He said:

"'If you don't behave yourself here for two years

with your mother and me, fishing and acting like an honest man, you will have to reckon with me.'

"The madman, counting upon his father's and mother's folly, made a face at him. Thereupon, Pierre fetched him a blow that put Master Jacques to bed for six months. The poor mother nearly died of grief. One night she was sleeping peacefully by her husband's side, when she heard a noise, sat up in bed, and received a blow from a knife on the arm. She shrieked and they brought a light. Pierre Cambremer saw his wife lying there wounded: he thought it was done by a robber, as if there was any robbers in our province, where you can carry ten thousand francs in gold from Le Croisic to Saint-Nazaire, without fear of having anyone ask you what you have under your arm.—Pierre looked for Jacques, but could not find him. The monster had not the face to return the next morning, but left word that he had gone to Batz.—I must tell you that his mother didn't know where to hide her money. Cambremer left his with Monsieur Dupotet at Le Croisic. Their son's wild ways had eaten up crowns by the hundred, francs by the hundred, *louis d'or;* they were ruined, as you might say, and it was hard for people who used to have about twelve thousand francs, including their island. No one knows how much Cambremer spent at Nantes to get his son back. Bad luck was playing the deuce with the whole family. Cambremer's brother had had misfortunes, and needed help. Pierre told him, to comfort him, that Jacques and Pérotte, the younger Cambremer's

daughter, should marry. Then he employed him in the fishing, to give him a way of earning his bread; for Joseph Cambremer was reduced to working for a living. His wife had died of the fever, and he had to hire a nurse for Pérotte. Pierre Cambremer's wife owed a hundred francs to different people on that little girl's account, for linen and clothes, and for two or three months' care, to the tall Frélu girl, who had had a child by Simon Gaudry and who nursed Pérotte. Mère Cambremer had sewed a Spanish coin into the ticking of her mattress and had written on the outside: *For Pérotte.* She had had a good education, she wrote like a clerk, and she had taught her son to read; that's what ruined him.—No one knew how it was done, but that scamp of a Jacques got scent of the gold, took it, and went off to Le Croisic to throw it away in drink. Goodman Cambremer, as if on purpose, came home in his boat just then. As he approached, he saw a bit of paper blowing about, picked it up, and carried it to his wife, who fainted away when she saw her own handwriting. Cambremer said nothing, went to Le Croisic, found out that his son was at the billiard-hall; first of all, he asked for the goodwoman who keeps the place, and said to her:

"'I told Jacques not to use a gold piece that he'll pay you with; bring it to me, I will wait at the door and give you silver for it.'

"The goodwoman brought him the piece. Cambremer took it, saying: 'Good!' and returned home. All the town knew that. But here is something

that I know and that other people only suspect. He told his wife to clean up their room which was downstairs; he made a fire on the hearth, lighted two candles, placed two chairs on one side of the fireplace, and a stool on the other side. Then he bade her get out his wedding-clothes, and ordered her to get her own on. He changed his clothes. When he was dressed, he went to his brother and told him to keep watch in front of the house and let him know if he heard any sound on either shore, this one or the one over yonder by the salt-marshes of Guérande. He went back into the house when he judged that his wife was dressed, loaded a gun, and hid it in the corner of the fireplace. Jacques was coming at last; he was late, he had drunk and played until ten o'clock; he had come by the point of Carnouf. His uncle heard him hailing, went to meet him on the marsh shore, and rowed him to the island without speaking. When he came in, his father said to him :

" ' Sit down there,' pointing to the stool. ' You are before your father and your mother, whom you have outraged, and who have to try you.'

"Jacques began to bellow because Cambremer's face was distorted in a strange way. The mother was as stiff as an oar.

" ' If you cry out, if you stir, if you don't sit as straight as a mast on your stool, I'll shoot you like a dog,' said Pierre, covering him with his gun.

" The son was as dumb as a fish; the mother said nothing.

"'Here,' said Pierre to his son, 'is a paper that was wrapped round a Spanish gold piece; the gold piece was in your mother's bed; your mother alone knew where she put it; I found this paper on the water as I rowed home; you gave this Spanish gold piece to Mère Fleurant this evening, and your mother can't find her piece in her bed. Explain yourself!'

"Jacques said that he didn't take his mother's piece, and that the other piece he had had left from Nantes.

"'So much the better,' said Pierre. 'How can you prove it?'

"'I had it.'

"'You didn't take your mother's?'

"'No.'

"'Can you swear it on your everlasting life?'

"He opened his mouth to swear; his mother looked him in the face, and said:

"'Jacques, my child, beware; don't swear, if it isn't true.—You can repent and mend your ways; there is still time.'

"And she wept.

"'You are first one thing, then another,' he said, 'and you've always tried to ruin me.'

"Cambremer turned pale.

"'What you say to your mother will increase your reckoning,' he said. 'Come to the point! Do you swear?'

"'Yes.'

"'Look,' said Pierre, 'did your piece have this cross which the sardine dealer who gave me ours had cut on it?'

"Jacques sobered off and wept.

"'We have talked enough,' said Pierre. 'I don't speak of what you have done before.—I don't choose to have a Cambremer put to death on the square at Le Croisic. Say your prayers and make haste! A priest is coming to confess you.'

"The mother had gone out, so as not to hear her son's doom. When she was outside, Cambremer the uncle came in with the rector of Piriac, but Jacques wouldn't say a word to him. He was sly, he knew his father well enough to know that he wouldn't kill him without confession.

"'Thanks, monsieur, and please excuse us,' said Cambremer to the priest, when he saw Jacques's obstinacy. 'I intended to give my son a lesson, and to beg you not to mention it.—If you don't mend your ways,' he said to Jacques, 'the first time will be the last, and I'll put an end to it without any confession.'

"He sent him to bed. The boy believed what his father said, and imagined that he could make it right with him. He went to sleep. The father sat up. When he saw that his son was sleeping his soundest, he filled his mouth with hemp, and tied a strip of canvas over it tight, then bound him hand and foot. He raved, he wept blood, so Cambremer told the judge. What would you expect! the mother threw herself at the father's feet.

"'He has been tried,' he said; 'you must help me put him in the boat.'

"She refused. Cambremer put him in without help, laid him in the bottom, put a stone about his

neck, rowed out of the basin into the open sea, and stopped opposite the rock where he is now. The poor mother, who had made her brother-in-law row her ashore here, cried 'Mercy!' all in vain; it was like a stone thrown at a wolf. It was a moonlight night; she saw the father throw him into the water,—her son for whom she still yearned; and as there was no wind, she heard *Splash*, then nothing more, not a sign or a bubble; the sea's a famous keeper, I promise you! When he rowed ashore here to quiet his wife, who was groaning, Cambremer found her the same as dead; the two brothers couldn't carry her, they had to put her in the boat that was used for the son, and they rowed her home, going round through the passage by Le Croisic. Alas! *la belle Brouin*, as they called her, didn't last a week. She died asking her husband to burn the cursed boat. Oh! he did it. As for him, he was everything and nothing, he didn't know what he wanted; he staggered when he walked, like a man who can't carry his wine. Then he went away for ten days, and when he came back he stationed himself where you saw him, and since he has been there, he hasn't spoken a word."

The fisherman took only a moment to tell us this story, and he told it even more simply than I have written it. The common people indulge in few reflections when they are telling a story, they pick out the fact that has impressed them, and describe it as they feel it. The tale was as sharp and incisive as a blow with an axe.

"I shall not go to Batz," said Pauline, when we reached the upper end of the lake.

We returned to Le Croisic across the salt-marshes, the fisherman, silent like ourselves, guiding us through the labyrinth. Our frame of mind had changed. We were both buried in melancholy reflections, saddened by the drama which explained the presentiment that had come upon us so swiftly at sight of Cambremer. We were both sufficiently well acquainted with the world to divine all that our guide had left untold of that triple life. The misfortunes of those three creatures were reproduced before our eyes as if we had seen them in the tableaux of a drama of which that father, expiating his unavoidable crime, represented the final catastrophe. We dared not look at the rock where sat the awe-inspiring man who held a whole country-side in fear. A few clouds darkened the sky; mists arose along the horizon. We were walking across the most painfully desolate tract of country I have ever seen; we trod upon vegetation that seemed pining and sickly; salt-marshes, which may rightly be called the scrofula of the earth. The ground is divided into parcels of unequal size, all fenced in by enormous banks of gray earth, and all filled with brackish water, upon the surface of which the salt floats. These trenches, made by the hand of man, are intersected within by causeways where the workmen walk, armed with long rakes, with which they skim off this brine, and carry it to certain round platforms erected here and there, when it is in condition to

pile. For two hours we skirted that depressing checker-board, where the salt is so abundant that it stifles the vegetation, and where we saw not a living soul, save now and then a *paludier*, a name given to those who harvest the salt. These men, or rather this clan of Bretons, wear a special costume, a white jacket not unlike that worn by brewers. They intermarry: there is no known instance of a girl of that tribe marrying anyone but a *paludier*. The horrible aspect of those marshes, where the mud was symmetrically marked by the teeth of the rake, and of that gray earth, which the Breton flora holds in horror, harmonized with our mental gloom. When we reached the spot where we cross the arm of the sea through which the water finds its way into that basin, and which serves, doubtless, to feed the salt-marshes, we were overjoyed to see the fringe of scanty vegetation along the sandy shore. As we were rowed across, we saw the islet where the Cambremers lived in the middle of the lake; we turned our faces away.

On arriving at our hotel, we noticed a billiard-table in one of the lower rooms, and when we ascertained that it was the only public billiard-table in Le Croisic, we made our preparations for departure during the night. The next day we were at Guérande. Pauline was still melancholy, and for my own part, I already felt the approach of the flame that is consuming my brain. I was so cruelly tormented by the visions I had of those three lives, that she said to me:

"Write the story, Louis; in that way you will change the nature of this fever of yours."

So I have written you the story of our adventure, my dear uncle; but it has already destroyed the tranquillity that I owed to our stay here and to my baths.

Paris, November 20, 1834.

THE RED INN

TO MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS DE CUSTINE

*

In a certain year, I do not know the date, a Parisian banker, who had very extensive business connections in Germany, entertained one of those friends whom business men make in different centres by correspondence, but who may be personally unknown to them for a long while. This friend, the head of some prominent house in Nuremberg, was a stout, hearty German, a man of taste and learning, a pipe-smoker above all things, with a fine large Nuremberg face and a square, expansive forehead, embellished with a few sparse white locks. He was the perfect type of the children of that pure and noble Germany, so prolific of honorable characters,—home of a nation whose peaceable instincts have never wavered, even after seven invasions. The stranger laughed frankly, listened attentively, and drank remarkably well, seeming to be quite as fond of champagne as of the pale vintage of the Johannisberg. His name was Hermann, like that of almost all the Germans who are brought upon the stage by novelists. Like a man who is incapable of doing anything lightly, he sat solidly in his chair at the banker's table, ate with the Teutonic appetite so famous throughout Europe, and bade farewell conscientiously to the dishes of the great Carême. To do honor to his guest, the master of the house had invited a few intimate friends, capitalists or merchants,

several agreeable and pretty women, whose pleasant prattle and free and easy manners were in harmony with German warm-heartedness. Really, if you could have seen, as I had the pleasure of seeing, that assemblage of people who had drawn in their commercial claws in order to speculate upon the pleasures of life, you would have found it difficult to retain your hatred of usurious discounts, or to curse failures. Man cannot always be doing evil. Even in the society of pirates, there must be now and then a peaceful hour when, even on board their ill-omened vessel, you imagine that you are sitting quietly in a swing.

"I hope that, before we separate, Monsieur Hermann will tell us some German story that will make us all shudder."

Those words were said, at dessert, by a pale, fair-haired young woman, who had undoubtedly been reading Hoffmann's tales, and the romances of Sir Walter Scott. She was the banker's only daughter, a fascinating creature, whose education was being completed at the *Gymnase*, and who doted on the plays that were acted there. At that moment, the guests were in that happy condition of indolence and silence which follows an exquisite repast, when we have presumed a little too far upon our powers of digestion. Leaning back in his chair, his wrist resting lightly on the edge of the table, each guest was carelessly playing with the gilded blade of his dessert knife. When a dinner reaches that declining stage, some people play with the seed of a pear, others

roll a crumb of bread between the thumb and forefinger; lovers form shapeless letters with the rinds of fruit; misers count their walnuts and arrange them on their plates, as a playwright marshals his supernumeraries at the back of the stage. There are divers little gastronomic felicities which Brillat-Savarin, an author so exhaustive in other respects, has not noted in his book. The servants had disappeared. The dessert was like a fleet after a battle; all stripped and pillaged and shattered. The dishes wandered about the table despite the persistent efforts of the mistress of the house to keep them in their places. Some of the guests scrutinized the Swiss landscapes symmetrically arranged on the gray walls of the dining-room. Not one of them was bored. We never knew a man to be depressed during the process of digesting a good dinner. We love to remain in an indefinable sort of tranquillity, a happy mean between the reverie of the thinker and the calm content of the ruminant beasts, which we must needs call the material melancholy of gastronomy. Wherefore the guests turned spontaneously to the good-humored German, delighted one and all to have a ballad to listen to, even though it were uninteresting. During that blissful interval, the voice of a story-teller always has a delicious sound to our benumbed senses; it increases their negative happiness. Being a seeker after pictures, I gazed admiringly upon those faces brightened by a smile, illumined by the candles, and flushed with good cheer; their varying expressions

produced a striking effect among the candelabra, the porcelain dishes, the glass, and the fruit.

My attention was suddenly fixed by the appearance of the guest who sat directly opposite me. He was a man of medium height, rather stout, with a smiling face, and the manners and bearing of a stock-broker, and apparently endowed with no more than ordinary intellectual powers; I had not noticed him previously; at that moment, his face, darkened, doubtless, in the artificial light, seemed to me to change its character; it had become earthy, marked with violet streaks. You would have said that it was the corpse-like head of a man in the death-agony. Motionless as the painted figures in a diorama, his dazed eyes were fixed upon the gleaming facets of a cut-glass stopper; but he certainly was not counting them, but seemed to be absorbed by some fantastic vision of the future or the past. When I had examined that equivocal countenance for a long while, it set my thoughts at work.

"Is he ill?" I said to myself. "Has he drunk too much? Is he ruined by the fall in the public funds? Is he thinking about tricking his creditors? —Look," I said to my neighbor, calling her attention to the stranger's face, "isn't that a failure in embryo?"

"Oh! he would be more cheerful," she replied.

Then, with a pretty movement of her head, she added:

"If that man ever ruins himself, I will go and tell the news in Pekin! He owns a million in real estate!

He was once a contractor for supplies for the imperial armies, an excellent man and unique in his way. He married a second time as a speculation, but he makes his wife extremely happy none the less. He has a pretty daughter whom he refused to acknowledge for a long, long time; but the death of his son, who unluckily was killed in a duel, forced him to take her with him, for he could not hope to have more children. Thus the poor girl suddenly became one of the richest heiresses in Paris. The loss of his only son caused the dear man bitter grief, which sometimes reappears."

At that moment, the contractor looked up at me; his expression made me start; it was so sombre and pensive! Assuredly, that glance summed up a whole life. But suddenly his face became cheerful; he took the cut-glass stopper, placed it, by a mechanical movement, in a carafe filled with water that stood in front of his plate, and turned his face toward Monsieur Hermann, with a smile. Evidently, that man, beautified by his gastronomic enjoyment, had not two ideas in his head, and was thinking of nothing at all. So that I was to some extent ashamed to expend my divinatory skill *in anima vili* of a thick-skulled financier. While I was making these phrenological observations, to no purpose, the worthy German had fortified his nose with a pinch of snuff, and was beginning his story. It would be very hard for me to reproduce it in his own words, with his frequent interruptions and his wordy digressions. So I have written it in my own way, allowing the

Nuremberger to retain all the faults, and taking possession of whatever there may be that is poetic and interesting in his narrative, with the candor of those writers who forget to place on the title-page of their books: *Translated from the German.*

I

THE IDEA AND THE DEED

In the latter part of Vendémiaire, year VII., a republican date corresponding to October 20, 1799, in the present style, two young men, having set out from Bonn in the morning, arrived about nightfall at the outskirts of Andernach, a small town on the left bank of the Rhine, a few leagues from Coblentz. At that time, the French army, under General Augereau, was manœuvring in sight of the Austrians, who occupied the right bank of the river. The headquarters of the republican division were at Coblentz, and one of the demi-brigades belonging to Augereau's corps was cantoned at Andernach. The two travellers were Frenchmen. By their blue and white uniforms with trimmings of red velvet, by their sabres, and especially by their hats, covered with green glazed cloth and adorned with tricolored cockades, even the German peasants would have known them for military surgeons, men of learning and of worth, the majority of whom were beloved, not only in the army, but in the territories invaded by our troops. At that period, many sons of good families, compelled to abandon their medical courses by the

recent law of conscription emanating from General Jourdan, had naturally preferred to continue their studies on the battle-field, rather than to be forced to perform military service little in harmony with their early education and the peaceable career for which they were destined. Studious men, peace-loving and obliging, those young surgeons were able to do some good amid so much misery, and they sympathized with the misfortunes of the learned men of the various countries through which the cruel civilization of the Republic forced its way.

The two young men in question, being both provided with route-charts, and with commissions as *sub-assistant surgeons* signed by Coste and Bernadotte, were on their way to join the demi-brigade to which they were attached. Both belonged to bourgeois families of Beauvais, of moderate means, but families wherein provincial purity of morals and provincial loyalty were transmitted as a part of their heritage. Attracted to the theatre of the war, before the time appointed for them to enter upon their duties, by the curiosity characteristic of young men, they had travelled by diligence to Strasburg. Although the maternal foresight had entrusted them with only an inconsiderable sum, they deemed themselves rich in the possession of a few louis, a veritable treasure at a time when *assignats* had reached the last stage of depreciation, and when gold was worth a very high premium. The two sub-assistants, neither of them being more than twenty years of age, grasped the poetry of their situation with all the enthusiasm

of youth. Between Strasburg and Bonn they viewed the Electorate and the banks of the Rhine as artists, as philosophers, as shrewd observers. When we are destined for a scientific career, truly we are multiple beings, at that age. Even as he makes love or travels, a sub-assistant surgeon should begin to store up the rudiments of his fortune or his glory to come. The two young men had abandoned themselves to the profound admiration which well-informed men feel at the aspect of the two banks of the Rhine and of the Swabian landscapes between Mayence and Cologne; a hardy, rich nature, exceedingly mountainous, overflowing with reminders of feudal times, bright with verdure, but bearing everywhere the marks of fire and sword. Louis XIV. and Turenne cauterized that beautiful region. Ruined castles scattered here and there attest the pride, perhaps the foresight, of the King of Versailles, who caused the destruction of the magnificent structures with which that part of Germany was once adorned. As you gaze upon that marvellous soil, covered with forests, where the picturesqueness of the Middle Ages abounds, but abounds in ruins, you can form an idea of the German genius, its musings and its mysticism.

The two friends were bent upon deriving experience as well as entertainment from their sojourn at Bonn. The main hospital of the Gallo-Batavian army and of Augereau's division was established in the electoral palace itself. The sub-assistants of recent creation had gone thither to call upon former comrades, to hand their letters of recommendation

to their chiefs and to become accustomed to the duties of their profession. But, there as elsewhere, they were despoiled of some of those prejudices, to which we remain faithful so long, in favor of the monuments and natural beauties of our native country. Amazed at the sight of the marble pillars which adorn the electoral palace, they admired more and more the grandeur of the German buildings, and found at every step new treasures, ancient or modern. From time to time, the roads along which the friends strayed on their way to Andernach, led them to the summit of a granite mountain of greater height than its neighbors. Through a vista in the forest, through a cleft in the rocks, they would obtain a view of the Rhine, framed by sandstone cliffs or by festoons of luxuriant vegetation. The valleys, the paths, the trees, exhaled that autumnal odor which disposes one to reverie; the tree-tops were beginning to turn golden, to take on the warm, brown tints which are a sign of old age; the leaves were falling, but the sky was still a lovely blue, and the dry roads made yellow lines in the landscape, lighted by the slanting rays of the setting sun. Half a league from Andernach, the friends trudged along amid a profound silence, as if war were not laying waste that fair country, following a path made for goats along the high walls of bluish granite between which the Rhine foams and boils. Soon they descended one of the slopes of the gorge at whose foot lies the little town, perched coquettishly on the river bank, where it affords a pretty little haven for boatmen.

"Germany is a very beautiful country!" cried one of the two young men, named Prosper Magnan, as he caught sight of the painted houses of Andernach, lying like eggs in a basket, separated by trees, by gardens, and by flowers.

Then he gazed admiringly for a moment at the peaked roofs with projecting timbers, the wooden staircases, the exterior galleries of a thousand peaceful dwellings, and the boats rising and falling with the waves in the little harbor.

When Monsieur Hermann uttered the name Prosper Magnan, the contractor seized the carafe, poured some water into his glass, and emptied it at a draught. The gesture attracted my attention, and I thought I could detect a slight trembling of the capitalist's hands and moisture on his brow.

"What is the ex-contractor's name?" I asked my obliging neighbor.

"Taillefer," she replied.

"Are you ill?" I exclaimed, noticing that that strange individual had become very pale.

"Not at all," he said, thanking me with a courteous gesture. "I am listening," he added, nodding his head to the other guests, who had turned simultaneously to look at him.

"I have forgotten the other young man's name," said Monsieur Hermann. "But I learned from Prosper Magnan's confidential disclosures to me that he was dark, rather thin, and of a jovial disposition. If you will allow me, I will call him Wilhem, to make the story clearer."

The honest German resumed his narrative, having thus, regardless of romanticism and local coloring, baptized the French sub-assistant with a German name.

When the two young men reached Andernach, it was quite dark. Presuming that they would have to waste much time in hunting up their superiors, presenting their credentials, and obtaining from them a billet in a town already full of soldiers, they had determined to pass their last night of liberty at an inn about a hundred paces from the town, the rich coloring of which, embellished by the rays of the setting sun, they had admired from the top of the cliffs. The inn in question being painted red from top to bottom, produced a striking effect in the landscape, whether one viewed it as standing out against the dark background of the houses of the town, or as contrasting its broad, red curtain with the different shades of green of the various trees, and its brilliant hue with the grayish tones of the water. The house owed its name to this exterior decoration, which had probably been imposed upon it from time immemorial by the caprice of its builder. A not unnatural mercantile superstition had led the various owners of the establishment, which was renowned among the boatmen of the Rhine, to preserve its outer dress with scrupulous care. The landlord of the *Red Inn* came to his door when he heard the horses' footsteps.

"*Pardieu!* messieurs," he cried, "a little later and you'd have had to sleep in the open air, like most of

your countrymen who are camping on the other side of Andernach. Every room in my house is full! If you are anxious to sleep in a good bed, I haven't anything but my own room to offer you. As for your horses, I'll go and spread some bedding for them in a corner of the courtyard. My stable's full of Christians to-day.—Are the gentlemen from France?" he continued, after a short pause.

"From Bonn," cried Prosper; "and we have eaten nothing since morning."

"Oh! so far as food goes," said the innkeeper, wagging his head, "people come from ten leagues round to eat their wedding-feasts at the *Red Inn!* You will have a meal for a prince, fish from the Rhine! that tells the story."

Having entrusted their tired steeds to the care of the host, who called his servants to no purpose, the sub-assistants entered the common room of the inn. The thick, white clouds emitted by a numerous company of smokers made it impossible for them to distinguish at first the people with whom they were to pass the evening; but, when they had taken seats beside a table, with the practical patience of philosophical travellers who have learned the uselessness of noise, they succeeded in distinguishing, through the tobacco-smoke, the inevitable accessories of a German inn: the stove, the clock, the tables, the beer-mugs, the long pipes; here and there appeared abnormal faces, Jewish and German, and the weather-beaten features of several boatmen. The epaulets of several French officers glistened

through the haze, and the ringing of spurs and sabres on the floor was incessant. Some were playing cards, others were quarrelling, or sitting by in silence, eating, drinking, or walking back and forth. A short, stout woman, with the black velvet cap, the blue and silver stomacher, the pin-ball, the bunch of keys, the silver clasp, and the braided hair, distinctive marks of all German landladies, whose costume, by the way, is reproduced so exactly in numberless engravings that it is too common to be described—the innkeeper's wife, I say, played upon the patience of the two friends with very remarkable skill. The noise gradually grew less, the guests retired, the smoke blew away. When the covers were laid for the young men, and the classic Rhine carp appeared on the table, the clock was striking eleven, and the common room was empty. Amid the silence of the night, they could hear vaguely the noise made by the horses in eating and stamping, the murmuring of the waters of the Rhine, and the indefinable sounds that one hears in a crowded inn when everyone is going to bed. Doors and windows opened and closed, voices whispered indistinguishable words, and there was some conversation from room to room. In that moment of silence and tumult combined, the two Frenchmen and the host, who was busily engaged in singing the praises of Andernach, the repast, his Rhine wine, the republican army and his wife, listened with vague interest to the hoarse shouts of some boatmen and the ripple of a boat approaching the port. The innkeeper, who

was evidently familiar with the guttural voices of the boatmen, rushed hastily from the room. He soon returned, accompanied by a short, stout man, behind whom were two boatmen carrying a heavy valise and several bundles. The bundles being deposited on the floor, the little man took his valise himself and kept it beside him, as he seated himself without ceremony at the table opposite the two friends.

"Go and sleep in your boat, as the inn is full," he said to the boatmen. "Everything considered, that will be the best plan."

"Monsieur, here is all the food I have left," said the host to the new-comer.

And he pointed to the supper served for the two Frenchmen.

"I haven't a crust of bread, not a bone—"

"How about sauerkraut?"

"Not enough to fill my wife's thimble! As I had the honor to tell you, you can't have any other bed than the chair you're sitting in, or any other room than this one."

At those words, the little man bestowed upon the innkeeper, the common room, and the two Frenchmen a glance in which prudence and alarm were equally depicted.

"At this point," said Monsieur Hermann, interrupting his narrative, "I ought to tell you that we never knew that stranger's real name or his history; but his papers showed that he came from Aix-la-Chapelle; he had taken the name of Walhenfer, and

owned a pin-factory of considerable size in the neighborhood of Neuwied. Like all the manufacturers of that country, he wore a frock-coat of ordinary cloth, trousers and waistcoat of dark green velvet, top-boots, and a broad leather belt. His face was round, his manners frank and cordial; but, during that evening, it was very hard for him to disguise entirely his secret apprehensions or, it may be, some painful anxiety. The innkeeper always maintained that the German tradesman was flying from his country. Later, I learned that his factory had been burned by one of those accidents unluckily so frequent in war time. Despite his generally thoughtful expression, his face denoted great good-nature. He had fine features, and especially a large neck, whose whiteness was so heightened by a black cravat that Wilhem jestingly called Prosper's attention to it."

At that point, Monsieur Taillefer drank a glass of water.

"Prosper politely invited the tradesman to share their supper, and Walhenfer accepted without ceremony, like a man who felt that he might be able to return the courtesy; he placed his valise on the floor, put his feet on it, removed his hat, moved up to the table, and laid aside his gloves, and a pair of pistols which he carried in his belt. The host having speedily laid another cover, the three guests began to satisfy their appetites, speaking little. The atmosphere in the room was so hot and the flies were so numerous that Prosper asked the host to open the window nearest the door, in order to change the air.

That window was barricaded by an iron bar, the ends of which fitted in holes in the sides of the frame. For greater security, there were two bolts to each shutter. By mere accident, Prosper noticed how the innkeeper set about opening the window.

"But, as I am speaking of the surroundings," continued Monsieur Hermann, "it will be as well for me to describe the interior arrangement of the inn; for the interest of this story depends upon a clear understanding of the locality. The common room, where our three travellers were sitting, had two doors. One opened on the road from Andernach, which skirts the Rhine. In front of the inn, there was, naturally enough, a small landing-stage, to which the boat, hired by the merchant for his journey, was made fast. The other door opened on the yard of the inn. That yard was surrounded by very high walls, and filled, for the moment, with cattle and horses, the stables being filled with people. The great gate had been so carefully barricaded, that the host, to save time, had admitted the merchant and the boatmen through the door opening on the street. After opening the window in accordance with Prosper Magnan's request, he set about securing that door, slipped the bars into their sockets, and screwed the nuts on the bolts.

"The innkeeper's room, in which the two sub-assistants were to sleep, adjoined the common room, and was separated by rather a thin partition from the kitchen, where the hostess and her husband were probably to pass the night. The maid-servant

had gone out, to seek a lodging in a manger, in the corner of a loft, or elsewhere. It will readily be understood that the common room, the host's bedroom, and the kitchen were, in a certain sense, isolated from the rest of the house. There were two great dogs in the courtyard, whose deep-voiced barking indicated very vigilant and very quick-tempered guardians.

"'How silent it is, and what a lovely night!' said Wilhem, looking at the sky when the innkeeper had finished fastening the door.

"At that time, the plashing of the waves was the only sound that could be heard.

"'Messieurs,' said the tradesman to the two Frenchmen, 'allow me to offer you a bottle or two of wine to wash down your carp. We shall forget the fatigue of the day while we drink. From your appearance, and the condition of your clothes, I see that you, like myself, have travelled far to-day.'

"The two friends accepted, and the host went out through the kitchen door on his way to the cellar, which was evidently located under that part of the building. When five venerable bottles, brought by him, were on the table, his wife served the rest of the supper. She cast the housekeeper's glance upon the room and the dishes; then, feeling sure that she had provided for all the travellers' wants, she returned to the kitchen. The four companions, for the host was invited to drink, did not hear her go to bed; but, later, during the intervals of silence with which the conversation of the drinkers was interspersed,

certain emphatic snores, made even more sonorous by the hollow partition of the loft where she had made her nest, caused the friends, and the host most of all, to smile. About midnight, when nothing was left on the table but crackers and cheese, dried fruit and good wine, the guests, principally the two young Frenchmen, became communicative. They talked about their country, their studies, and the war. Eventually, the conversation became animated. Prosper Magnan brought tears to the eyes of the fugitive tradesman, when, with the outspokenness of a Picard, and the artlessness of a kindly and affectionate nature, he considered what his mother was probably doing at that moment, while he was on the banks of the Rhine.

"'I can see her,' he said, 'reading her evening prayer before going to bed! She certainly does not forget me, and she must be saying to herself: "Where is my poor Prosper?" But, if she has won a few sous from her neighbor,—your mother, perhaps,' he added, touching Wilhem's elbow,—'she will go and put them in the great red earthen jar in which she is collecting the money necessary to buy thirty acres of land that are surrounded by her little estate of Lescheville. The thirty acres are worth about sixty thousand francs. Ah! there are fine fields! If I could have them some day, I would spend the rest of my life at Lescheville, without ambition! How many times my father has longed for those thirty acres and the pretty little stream that winds among the meadows! But he

died before he was able to buy them.—I have often played there!'

"'Haven't you your *hoc erat in votis*, too, Monsieur Walhenfer?' queried Wilhem.

"'Yes, monsieur, yes! but it came, and now—'

"The goodman paused without finishing his sentence.

"'Last year,' said the host, whose face had become slightly flushed, 'I bought a vineyard I had wanted for ten years.'

"They talked on thus, like men whose tongues are loosened by wine, and conceived for one another that ephemeral friendship of which we are always lavish when travelling, so that, when they were about to retire, Wilhem offered the tradesman his bed.

"'You may accept it unhesitatingly,' he said, 'for I can sleep with Prosper. It won't be the first time nor the last. You are our dean, we must honor gray hairs.'

"'I'll tell you,' said the host, 'my wife's bed has several mattresses, you can put one on the floor.'

"He went and closed the window, making no more noise than that prudent operation required.

"'I accept,' said the tradesman. 'I confess,' he added, lowering his voice and looking at the two friends, 'that I should like it. My boatmen seem to me suspicious-looking fellows. For to-night I am not sorry to be in the company of two gallant and upright young men, French soldiers. I have a hundred thousand francs in gold and diamonds in my valise!'

"The sympathetic caution with which this imprudent confidence was received by the two young men reassured the worthy German. The host assisted his guests to take one of the beds apart. Then, when everything was arranged as well as possible, he bade them good-night and went to bed. The tradesman and the two Frenchmen joked one another about their pillows. Prosper placed his case of instruments and Wilhem's under his mattress, to raise it and serve the purpose of the bolster that it lacked, at the same moment that Walhenfer, with excessive precaution, placed his valise under his pillow.

"'We shall both sleep on our riches: you on your gold, I on my instrument case! It remains to be seen whether my instruments will be worth as much money to me as you have made.'

"'You may well hope so,' said the tradesman. 'Hard work and probity will accomplish anything, but be patient.'

"Walhenfer and Wilhem were quickly asleep. Whether because his bed was too hard or because his extreme fatigue kept him awake, or because of his frame of mind, Prosper Magnan could not sleep. His thoughts insensibly took an evil turn. He could think of nothing but the hundred thousand francs on which the tradesman was sleeping. To him, a hundred thousand francs was an enormous fortune, and ready at hand. He began by expending them in different ways, building castles in Spain, as we all take such pleasure in doing during the moment before we fall asleep, when confused

images are born in our minds, and often, in the silence, thought acquires a magic power. He would gratify his mother's longings, he would buy the thirty acres of land, he would marry a young woman of Beauvais, to whom the disparity of their fortunes at present forbade him to aspire. He mapped out a whole lifetime of enjoyment with the money, and fancied himself the happy father of a family, rich, highly considered in his province, and perhaps mayor of Beauvais. His Picard brain took fire, he cudgelled his wits to invent a method of changing his fictions to realities. He set about planning a crime in theory, with extraordinary ardor. Dreaming of the tradesman's death, he saw distinctly the gold and the diamonds: his eyes were dazzled with them. His heart beat fast. The bare deliberation was a crime, doubtless. Fascinated by that mass of gold, he made himself morally drunk by murderous arguments. He asked himself if that poor German really needed to live, and imagined that he had never lived. In a word, he planned the crime in a way to assure impunity. The other bank of the Rhine was occupied by the Austrians; there was a boat and boatmen under the windows; he could cut the man's throat, toss him into the Rhine, escape through the window with the valise, bribe the boatmen with gold, and cross to the Austrians. He went so far as to consider the degree of skill he had acquired in the use of his surgical instruments, so that he could cut off his victim's head without allowing him to utter a single cry."

At that point, Monsieur Taillefer wiped his forehead and drank a little more water.

"Prosper rose slowly and noiselessly. Certain that he had roused no one, he dressed and went into the common room; with that fatal intelligence which men suddenly discover that they possess, with that strength of cunning and of will which never fails prisoners or criminals in the accomplishment of their projects, he unscrewed the bolts, removed the iron bars from their sockets without making the slightest sound, placed them against the wall, and opened the shutters, bearing down upon the hinges to deaden their creaking. The moon, casting its pale light upon the scene, enabled him to distinguish objects vaguely in the room where Wilhem and Walhenfer were sleeping. He told me that he paused a moment there. The palpitations of his heart were so rapid and strong and resonant, that he was almost terrified by them. Then he feared that he could not play his part coolly; his hands trembled, and the soles of his feet seemed to be resting on coals of fire. But such good fortune had attended the execution of his plan thus far, that he fancied that he could see predestination in such goodwill on the part of chance. He opened the window, returned to his room, took out his instrument case, and selected the instrument best adapted to finish his crime.

"'When I approached the bed,' he said to me, 'I instinctively commended myself to God.'

"As he raised his arm, collecting all his strength, he seemed to hear a voice within him, and fancied

that he saw a light. He threw the instrument on his bed, fled into the other room, and stood by the window. There he conceived the most profound horror of himself; and, feeling, nevertheless, that his virtue was weak, fearing that he might again succumb to the spell that was upon him, he leaped quickly out upon the road and walked along the Rhine, doing sentry-duty, as it were, in front of the inn. He frequently went as far as Andernach in his hasty promenade; frequently, too, his feet led him to the foot of the slope down which he had come to the inn; but the silence of the night was so profound, he relied so confidently on the watch-dogs, that sometimes he lost sight of the window he had left open. His object was to tire himself out and to compel sleep. But, walking thus beneath a cloudless sky, watching the beautiful stars, and soothed, perhaps, by the pure night air and the melancholy rippling of the waves, he fell into a reverie which led him back by degrees to healthy moral ideas. Reason at last dissipated completely his momentary madness. His education, the precepts of religion, and more than all else, he told me, the memories of the modest life he had hitherto led under his father's roof, triumphed over his evil thoughts.—When he returned, after abandoning himself for a long while to the charms of meditation on the river bank, leaning upon a great rock, he would have been able, he told me, not to sleep, but to lie awake beside a billion in gold. When his probity came forth proud and strong from that conflict, he fell on his knees

in an outburst of frantic joy, thanked God, and was as happy, light-hearted, and contented as on the day of his first communion, when he had deemed himself worthy a place among the angels, because he had passed the day without sinning in word or act or thought. He returned to the inn, closed the window with no fear of making a noise, and went to bed at once. His mental and physical weariness made him defenceless against sleep. A very short time after he placed his head on his mattress, he fell into that first fantastic doze that always precedes sound sleep. At such times, the senses become benumbed and life departs slowly; one's thoughts are incomplete, and the last sudden movements of our senses simulate a sort of reverie.

"'How heavy the air is!' thought Prosper. 'It seems as if I were breathing a damp vapor.'

"He accounted for that atmospheric effect vaguely by the difference between the temperature in the room and the pure air of the fields. But soon he became conscious of a noise at regular intervals, like that made by drops of water falling from the stop-cock of a fountain. In obedience to an impulse of terror, he started to rise and call the host, to waken the tradesman or Wilhem; but, unfortunately for him, he remembered the wooden clock; and, fancying that he could recognize its ticking, he fell asleep with that vague, confused thought in his mind."

"Would you like some water, Monsieur Taillefer?" said the master of the house, as he saw the banker mechanically take up the carafe.

It was empty.

Monsieur Hermann continued his narrative, after the brief interruption occasioned by the host's question.

"The next morning," he said, "Prosper Magnan was awakened by a great uproar. He fancied that he had heard piercing shrieks, and he was conscious of that violent irritation of the nerves which we undergo when we complete, after waking, a painful sensation begun during our sleep. A physiological phenomenon takes place within us, a start,—to use the vulgar expression,—which has not yet been sufficiently observed, although it contains elements of interest to science. That terrible agony, produced, perhaps, by a too abrupt junction of our two natures, which are almost always separated during sleep, is ordinarily of brief duration; but it persisted in the case of the poor sub-assistant; indeed, it suddenly increased, and caused him a most frightful creeping sensation, when he discovered a pool of blood between his bed and Walhenfer's mattress. The poor German's head lay on the floor, his body had remained in the bed. All his blood had gushed out at the neck. When he saw the eyes still open and staring, when he saw the blood on his sheets, and even on his hands, when he recognized his instrument on the bed, Prosper Magnan fainted, and fell into Walhenfer's blood.

"'It was a punishment for my thoughts,' he said to me.

"When he recovered consciousness, he found

himself in the common room. He was sitting on a chair, surrounded by French soldiers, and facing a watchful, curious assemblage. He glanced in a dazed way at a republican officer, who was taking down the testimony of certain witnesses, and presumably preparing a report. He recognized the innkeeper, his wife, the two boatmen, and the servant of the inn. The surgical instrument that the murderer had used—"

At that point, Monsieur Taillefer coughed, took out his handkerchief to blow his nose, and wiped his forehead. These movements, which were perfectly natural, were noticed by no one but myself; all the other guests had their eyes fixed on Monsieur Hermann, and were listening to him with a sort of avidity. The contractor rested his elbow on the table, and his head on his right hand, and gazed earnestly at Hermann. Thereafter, he allowed no sign of emotion or of interest to escape him; but his face remained pensive and of an earthy hue, as at the time when he was playing with the stopper of the carafe.

"The surgical instrument used by the assassin lay on the table, with Prosper's instrument case, wallet, and papers. The glances of the assemblage were bent alternately upon those damaging pieces of testimony, and upon the young man, who was apparently in a dying condition, and whose glazed eyes seemed to see nothing. The confused muttering outside the house indicated the presence of a multitude attracted by the report of the crime, and

perhaps also by a desire to see the assassin. The tread of the sentries posted under the windows of the common room and the rattle of their muskets drowned the murmur of conversation among the crowd; but the inn was closed, the courtyard was silent and empty. Unable to endure the gaze of the man who was questioning the witnesses, Prosper Magnan felt the pressure of a man's hand upon his own, and raised his eyes to see who was his friend amid that hostile crowd. He recognized, by his uniform, the surgeon-major of the demi-brigade cantoned at Andernach. The man's expression was so stern, so searching, that the poor fellow shuddered, and let his head fall on the back of his chair. A soldier gave him some vinegar to inhale, and he at once recovered consciousness. But his haggard eyes seemed so devoid of life and intelligence, that the surgeon, after feeling his pulse, said to the officer:

"'Captain, it is impossible to question this man just now—'

"'Very well, take him away,' said the captain, interrupting the surgeon and addressing a corporal, who was standing behind Prosper.

"'You infernal coward,' said the soldier in a low voice, 'try at least to walk straight before these damned Germans, and save the honor of the Republic!'

"That apostrophe aroused Prosper Magnan, who rose and took two or three steps toward the door; but, when the door opened, when he felt the breath of the outer air, and saw the crowd rush in, his

strength abandoned him, his knees gave way, he staggered.

"'The beggarly sawbones deserves death twice over!—Forward!' said the two soldiers, who had given him their arms to hold him up.

"'Oh! the coward! the coward! There he is! there he is! That's the man!'

"These words seemed to be spoken by a single voice, the tumultuous voice of the crowd which followed him, hurling insults at him, and increased at every step. During the journey from the inn to the prison, the tramping of the soldiers and the mob, the sight of the sky and the fresh coolness of the air, the view of Andernach, and the quivering of the waters of the Rhine—the impressions left by all those details upon the mind of the sub-assistant were vague, confused, and deadened, like all the sensations he had experienced since he awoke. At times, he told me, he fancied that he was dead.

"I was then in prison," said Monsieur Hermann, interrupting his narrative. "With the enthusiasm that we all feel at twenty years, I had burned to defend my country, and I commanded a free company which I had organized in the neighborhood of Andernach. A few days before this, I had fallen into the hands of a French detachment of eight hundred men, during the night. We numbered two hundred at the outside. My spies had sold me. I was thrown into prison at Andernach. It was proposed to shoot me, to set an example which should terrorize the country. The French also talked of reprisals,

but the murder for which the republicans wished to take vengeance on me was not committed in the electorate. My father had obtained a reprieve of three days so that he might go to General Augereau and solicit my pardon, which was granted. So it happened that I saw Prosper Magnan when he entered Andernach prison, and he aroused the most profound compassion in my heart. Although he was pale, haggard, stained with blood, his face wore an expression of honesty and innocence which impressed me deeply. To my perception, Germany breathed in his long, fair hair, in his blue eyes. A faithful image of my sinking country, he appeared to me like a victim, not like a murderer. As he passed under my window, his face wore the bitter, melancholy smile of an insane man who has a fleeting glimmer of reason. That smile certainly was not the smile of an assassin. When I saw the jailer, I questioned him about his new prisoner.

"'He hasn't spoken since we put him in his cell. He sat down, took his head in his hands, and has been asleep or reflecting on the position he's in. According to what the French say, he will be tried tomorrow morning, and be shot in twenty-four hours.'

"I stood under the prisoner's window that evening during the few minutes allotted me to walk in the prison-yard. We talked together, and he told me his adventure simply, answering my various questions with perfect frankness. After that first conversation, I had no doubt of his innocence. I asked and obtained permission to remain with him

for some hours. I saw him several times, and the poor child confided all his thoughts to me. He considered himself both innocent and guilty. Remembering the ghastly temptation he had had strength to resist, he feared that he had committed during his sleep, in a fit of somnambulism, the crime he had dreamed of committing when he was awake.

"'But your companion?' I said.

"'Oh!' he cried, fiercely, 'Wilhem is incapable—'

"He did not finish. At that warm declaration, overflowing with youth and virtue, I pressed his hand.

"'When he woke,' he continued, 'he must have been frightened, he must have lost his head and run away.'

"'Without waking you,' I said. 'But in that case your defence will be easily managed, for Walhenfer's valise will prove not to have been stolen.'

"He suddenly burst into tears.

"'Oh! yes, I am innocent,' he cried. 'I have done no murder. I remember my dreams. I was playing at prisoners' bars with my schoolmates. I couldn't have cut off that man's head while I was dreaming that I was running!'

"But, despite the gleams of hope that restored his tranquillity somewhat at times, he was still crushed by remorse. He had certainly raised his arm to cut off the tradesman's head. He was his own judge, and he insisted that his heart was not pure after he had committed the crime in thought.

"'And yet, I am kind-hearted!' he cried. 'O my poor mother! perhaps at this moment she is playing *imperial* with her neighbors in her little tapestry-hung salon, laughing gayly. If she knew that I had so much as raised my hand to murder a man—oh! she would die! And I am in prison, accused of committing a crime! Even if I did not kill that man, I shall certainly kill my mother!'

"As he said that, he did not weep; but, in one of the short, fierce fits of frenzy to which Picards are peculiarly subject, he rushed at the wall, and would have beaten his head against it, if I had not held him.

"'Wait until you are tried,' I said. 'You are innocent, you will be acquitted. And your mother—'

"'My mother,' he cried, frantically, 'will learn of the charge against me first of all! It is always so in small towns; the poor woman will die of grief. Besides, I am not innocent. Do you want to know the whole truth? I feel that my conscience has lost its virginity.'

"After that painful outburst, he sat down, folded his arms across his breast, hung his head, and gazed at the floor with a gloomy air. At that moment, the turnkey came to tell me to return to my own cell; but, grieved to leave my companion alone at a moment when he seemed to me so profoundly depressed, I embraced him affectionately.

"'Have patience,' I said, 'perhaps all will go well. If an honest man's voice can impose silence on your doubts, know that I esteem and love you.

Accept my friendship, and sleep upon my heart, if you are not at peace with your own.'

"The next day about nine o'clock, a corporal and four fusileers came to take the young surgeon away. When I heard the noise made by the soldiers, I went to my window. When the young man crossed the courtyard, he looked up at me. Never shall I forget that glance, full of sad thoughts, of presentiments, of resignation, and of an indefinable melancholy charm. It was a sort of unspoken but intelligible testament, whereby a friend bequeathed his lost life to his last friend. The night had doubtless been very hard and very lonely for him; but it may be that the pallor stamped upon his face indicated a stoicism drawn from a newly-born self-esteem. It may be that he had purified himself by remorse and believed that he had washed away his sin in sorrow and in shame. He walked with a firm step, and he had washed away the blood with which he had involuntarily smeared himself.

"'My hands dabbled in it while I was asleep, for my sleep is always very restless,' he had said to me the night before, in a terribly despairing tone.

"I learned that he was to appear before a court-martial. The division was to advance on the following day, and the brigade commander did not wish to leave Andernach without exacting a penalty for the crime on the spot where it had been committed. I was in a state of mortal anxiety while the court-martial was sitting. At last, Prosper Magnan was

brought back to the prison, about noon. At that moment, I was taking my usual walk. He spied me and threw himself into my arms.

"'Lost!' he said. 'I am lost beyond hope! Here everybody will look upon me as a murderer—'

"He raised his head proudly.

"'This injustice has restored my innocence absolutely. My life would always have been disturbed, my death will be without reproach. But is there a future life?'

"The whole eighteenth century spoke in that abrupt question. He stood lost in thought.

"'Tell me how you answered,' I said. 'What did they ask you? Didn't you tell them the story frankly, as you told it to me?'

"He gazed earnestly at me for a moment; after that awful pause, he replied, with feverish rapidity of speech:

"'They asked me first: "Did you go out of the inn during the night?"—I said: "Yes."—"How?"—I blushed and replied: "Through the window."—"Then you opened it?"—"Yes."—"You must have been very careful; the innkeeper heard nothing!"—I was stupefied. The boatmen testified that they saw me walking back and forth, now toward Andernach and now toward the forest. I made several trips, they said. I buried the gold and diamonds. The valise has not been found!—And then I was still at war with my remorse. When I tried to speak, a pitiless voice cried out to me: *You intended to commit the crime!*—Everything was

against me, even myself! They questioned me about my companion, and I defended him vigorously. Then they said to me: "We have got to find the guilty person among you four, yourself, your comrade, the innkeeper, and his wife. This morning, all the doors and windows were found closed!" At that remark, he continued, 'I was speechless, helpless, soulless. Being more certain of my friend than of myself, I could not accuse him. I understood that we were looked upon as being equally concerned in the murder, and that I was considered the less cunning of the two! I tried to explain the crime by somnambulism and to excuse my friend; thereupon I became incoherent. I am lost. I read my sentence in the eyes of my judges. They smiled incredulously more than once. It is all over. There is no doubt about it. I shall be shot to-morrow.—I no longer think of myself,' he added, 'but of my poor mother!'

"He paused, looked up at the sky, but shed no tears. His eyes were dry, and worked convulsively.

"'Frédéric!'—

"Ah! the other's name was Frédéric—Frédéric! Yes, that was the name!" exclaimed Monsieur Hermann, triumphantly.

My neighbor touched my foot, and motioned to me to look at Monsieur Taillefer. The former contractor had carelessly shaded his eyes with his hand; but we thought that we could see, between his fingers, the threatening flame of his glance.

"Suppose his name were Frédéric?" she whispered in my ear. I replied by winking at her as if to say: "Hush!"

Hermann continued thus:

"'Frédéric,' cried the young Frenchman, 'has abandoned me like a coward. He must have been afraid. Perhaps he concealed himself in the inn, for both our horses were in the courtyard in the morning.—What an incomprehensible mystery!' he added, after a moment's silence. 'Somnambulism! somnambulism! I have never had but one attack of it in my life, and that was when I was only six years of age.—Shall I go from here,' he cried, stamping his foot on the ground, 'carrying with me all the friendship there is in the world? Must I die twice over through doubt of a brotherhood begun at the age of five years, and continued through college and the School of Medicine? Where is Frédéric?'

"He wept. So it seems that there is a sentiment dearer than life!

"'Let us go in,' he said to me. 'I prefer to be in my cell. I do not want anyone to see me weeping. I shall go bravely to my death, but I cannot play the hero unseasonably, and I confess that I regret my youth and my life that promised so fairly.—I did not sleep last night; I recalled the scenes of my childhood, and saw myself running through the fields, the memory of which, perhaps, caused my destruction.—I *had* a future,' he said, interrupting himself. 'Twelve men and a sub-lieutenant, who will shout: "Carry arms! aim, fire!"

a long roll on the drums; and infamy! that is my future now. Oh! there is a God, or all this would be too absurd.'

"Thereupon he threw his arms about me and pressed me convulsively to his heart.

"'Ah!' he said, 'you are the last man to whom I shall be able to pour out my heart. You will be free! you will see your mother! I do not know whether you are rich or poor, but what does it matter? you are the whole world to me.—They will not fight forever. When peace is declared, go to Beauvais. If my mother survives the fatal news of my death, you will find her there. Say to her these comforting words: "He was innocent!" She will believe you.—I am going to write to her,' he continued, 'but you will take her my last glance, you will tell her that you are the last man I embraced. Ah! how she will love you, poor woman, you who were my last friend!—Here,' he said, after a pause, during which he seemed to be overwhelmed by the weight of his memories, 'officers and soldiers are strangers to me, and they all look upon me with horror. Except for you, my innocence would be a secret between Heaven and myself.'

"I swore that I would faithfully carry out his last wishes. My words, my demonstration of affection, touched him. A short time after, the soldiers returned to take him before the court once more. He was condemned.

"I know nothing of the formalities which accompanied or followed that first judgment, I do not know

whether the young surgeon used every possible means to defend his life; but he expected to be executed the following morning, and he passed the night writing to his mother.

"'We shall both be free,' he said, with a smile, when I went to see him the next morning: 'I have been told that the general has signed your pardon.'

"I remained silent, and gazed at him in order to fix his features indelibly in my memory. Thereupon he assumed an expression of bitter humiliation, and said to me:

"'I have been a vile coward! All night long I besought pardon of these walls.'

"He pointed to the walls of his dungeon.

"'Yes, yes,' he continued, 'I howled in despair, I rebelled, I suffered the most horrible of mental agony.—I was alone!—Now, I think of what others will say.—Courage is like a dress, to be put on or off. I must go to my death with self-respect. And so—'"

II

THE TWO KINDS OF JUSTICE

"Oh! do not finish!" cried the young woman who asked for the story, interrupting the Nuremberger without ceremony. "I prefer to remain in uncertainty, and to believe that he was saved. If I should learn that he was shot, I should not sleep to-night. You can tell me the rest to-morrow."

We rose from the table. As she took Monsieur Hermann's arm, my neighbor said to him:

"He was shot, was he not?"

"Yes, I was a witness of the execution."

"What! monsieur, you were able to—"

"He wished it, madame. There is something very ghastly about following the funeral procession of a living man, a man you love, an innocent man! The poor fellow did not take his eyes from my face. He seemed to live only in me! He wanted me, he said, to carry his last breath to his mother."

"Did you see her?"

"After the peace of Amiens, I came to France to bear his mother that comforting assurance: 'He was innocent!' I undertook that pilgrimage as a religious duty. But Madame Magnan had died of

consumption. Not without profound emotion did I burn the letter entrusted to me for her. You will laugh, perhaps, at my Teutonic susceptibility, but I saw a drama of sublime melancholy in the everlasting mystery that was to enshroud those farewell messages, cast between two graves, unknown of all creation, like the shriek uttered in the midst of the desert by the traveller surprised by a lion."

"And suppose someone should bring you face to face with one of the men in this salon, and should say: 'There is the murderer!' would not that be another drama? I asked, interrupting him. And what would you do?"

Monsieur Hermann went and got his hat and left the house.

"You act like a boy, and very inconsiderately," said my neighbor. "Look at Taillefer! see him sitting on the couch yonder in the chimney-corner, while Mademoiselle Fanny hands him a cup of coffee; he is smiling. Could a murderer, who must have been kept upon the rack by that story, show such calmness? Has he not a truly patriarchal air?"

"Yes, but go and ask him if he fought in Germany!" I cried.

"Why not?"

And with the audacity which women rarely lack in carrying out an enterprise that attracts them, or when their mind is swayed by curiosity, my neighbor accosted the contractor.

"You have been in Germany?" she said.

Taillefer nearly dropped his saucer.

"I, madame?—No, never."

"What's that you say, Taillefer?" interposed the banker-host; "weren't you in the commissary department in the Wagram campaign?"

"Oh! yes," replied Taillefer, "I did go there then."

"You are wrong, he's a good man," said my neighbor, returning to my side.

"Very good," I exclaimed; "before the end of the evening, I will drive the murderer out of the slime in which he is hiding!"

A moral phenomenon of astonishing profundity, and yet too simple to be remarked, takes place before our eyes every day. If two men meet in a salon, one of whom has good reason to despise or detest the other, whether because of his knowledge of some personal and latent fact which sullies him; or of some secret condition, or even because of a meditated revenge, those two men divine each other's thoughts, and are conscious of the abyss that separates them or is to separate them. They watch each other stealthily, and each is intent upon the other's movements; their glances, their gestures permit an indefinable suggestion of their thoughts to transpire, there is a sort of magnetism between them. I do not know which exerts the more powerful attraction, revenge or crime, hatred or insult. Like the priest who could consecrate the host only in presence of the evil spirit, they are both embarrassed, suspicious: one is polite,

the other gloomy, I do not know which; one flushes or turns pale, the other trembles. Often the avenger is as cowardly as the victim. Few people have the courage to cause trouble, even though it be necessary; and many men hold their peace or forgive, because they dislike a sensation or fear a tragic result. That power of entering into one another's thoughts and feelings caused a mysterious struggle between the contractor and myself. After the first question I asked him during Monsieur Hermann's narrative, he avoided my glance. It may be that he avoided the glances of all the guests! He talked with the inexperienced Fanny, the banker's daughter, feeling, doubtless, like all criminals, a longing to consort with innocence, hoping to find rest with it. But, although I was at some distance from him, I listened to him, and my piercing eye fascinated his. When he thought that he could safely cast a stealthy glance at me, our eyes met, and he instantly lowered his lids. Exhausted by that torture, Taillefer eagerly sought to put an end to it, by taking his place at the card-table. I went and bet upon his opponent, hoping to lose my money. My hope was fulfilled. I took the losing player's place and found myself confronting the murderer.

"Monsieur," I said to him, while he was dealing, "will you be kind enough to change your counters?"

He hastily moved his counters from left to right. My neighbor had taken a seat near me, and I glanced significantly at her.

"Are you Monsieur Frédéric Taillefer, whose

family I knew very well at Beauvais?" I said, addressing the contractor.

"Yes, monsieur," he replied.

He dropped his cards, took his head in his hands, requested one of those who were betting on him to take his hand, and rose from his chair.

"It is too hot here!" he exclaimed. "I am afraid—"

He did not finish. His face suddenly assumed an expression indicating horrible pain, and he left the room abruptly. The master of the house followed him, apparently taking a lively interest in his condition. My neighbor and I looked at each other; but I detected an indefinable suggestion of bitter melancholy upon her face.

"Is your conduct very merciful?" she asked, leading me into a window-recess when I left the card-table, a loser. "Would you care to accept the power to read all hearts? Why not leave human justice and divine justice to act? If we elude the first, do we ever escape the other? Are the privileges of the president of an assize court very enviable? You have almost performed the functions of executioner—"

"After sharing and stimulating my curiosity, you read me a moral lecture!"

"You have caused me to reflect," she replied.

"Then peace to the wicked, war upon the unfortunate, and let us deify gold! But enough of this," I added, with a laugh. "Look, I beg you, at the young lady just entering the salon."

"Well?"

"I saw her three days since at the Neapolitan ambassador's ball; I fell passionately in love with her. In pity's name, tell me who she is. No one could—"

"That is Mademoiselle Victorine Taillefer!"

A mist passed before my eyes.

"Her step-mother," said my neighbor, whose voice I could scarcely hear, "has just taken her from the convent where her education was completed very late. For a long time, her father refused to acknowledge her. This is the first time she has been here. She is very lovely and very rich!"

The words were accompanied by a sardonic smile. At that moment, we heard violent but stifled shrieks; they seemed to proceed from an adjoining room, and echoed feebly through the gardens.

"Is not that Monsieur Taillefer's voice?" I exclaimed.

We listened intently to the sounds, and heart-rending groans reached our ears. The banker's wife rushed hastily toward us and closed the window.

"Let us avoid scenes," she said. "If Mademoiselle Taillefer should hear her father, she might have an attack of hysteria!"

The banker returned to the salon, went to Victorine, and said a word to her in an undertone. She uttered a cry, darted to the door, and disappeared. This incident produced a great sensation. The games were suspended. Everyone questioned his neighbor. The murmur of voices increased, and the guests stood about in groups.

"Can it be that Monsieur Taillefer is—?" I began.

"Dead?" cried my jocose neighbor. "You would wear mourning for him with a cheerful face, I fancy!"

"But what has happened to him?"

"The poor man," replied the mistress of the house, "is subject to a disease of which I can't remember the name, although Monsieur Brousson has told me often enough; and he has just had an attack."

"What is the nature of the disease?" suddenly inquired an examining magistrate.

"Oh! it's a horrible disease, monsieur," she replied. "The doctors know no remedy for it. The pain, it seems, is something atrocious. The unfortunate man had an attack one day at my country house, and I actually had to go to a neighbor's house in order not to hear him; he shrieks horribly and tries to kill himself; at the time I speak of, his daughter was obliged to have him tied to his bed, and a strait-jacket put on him. The poor creature insists that he has animals in his head, gnawing at his brains; he has sudden pains, a frightful sawing and twitching at every nerve. He has such pains in his head that he could not feel the moxas they used to apply to assuage his suffering; but Monsieur Brousson, when he took him for his doctor, forbade them; he said that it was a nervous affection, an inflammation of the nerves, which required an application of leeches to the neck and opium on the head; and it's

a fact that the attacks have become less frequent, and only come about once a year, toward the end of autumn. When he recovers, Taillefer always says again and again that he would rather be broken on the wheel than endure such pain."

"It would seem, then, that he suffers considerably!" said a stock-broker, the wit of the salon.

"Why, last year," she continued, "he almost died. He had gone to his country estate alone, on urgent business; he lay flat on the ground, like a dead man, for twenty-two hours, perhaps because there was no one to help him. He was saved only by a very hot bath."

"Is it a species of tetanus?" inquired the stock-broker.

"I do not know," was the reply. "For nearly thirty years now he has *enjoyed* this disease, which he contracted in the army; he says that he got a splinter of wood into his head, falling into a boat; but Brousson hopes to cure him. They say that the English have discovered a way to treat the disease, without danger, with prussic acid—"

At that moment, a more piercing shriek than those that had gone before rang through the house, and froze our blood with horror.

"There, that is what I expected at any moment," said the banker's wife. "It made me jump and made all my nerves tingle. But, strangely enough, poor Taillefer, even while he is suffering unheard-of agony, is never in danger of dying. He eats and drinks as usual during the momentary lulls of that

horrible torture.—Nature is very strange in her action! A German physician told him that it was a sort of gout in the head: that is practically in accord with Brousson's opinion."

I left the group that had formed about the mistress of the house, and went out with Mademoiselle Taillefer, who was summoned by a servant.

"O my God! my God!" she cried, "how has my father offended Heaven to be made to suffer thus? Such a kind-hearted man!"

I went down the stairs with her, and, as I assisted her to enter the carriage, I saw her father inside, bent double. Mademoiselle Taillefer tried to stifle his groans by covering his mouth with a handkerchief; unluckily, he caught sight of me, his face seemed to become even more distorted, a convulsive shriek rent the air, he cast a terrible glance at me, and the carriage drove away.

That dinner, that evening, exerted a baleful influence upon my life and my sentiments. I loved Mademoiselle Taillefer, for the very reason, perhaps, that honor and delicacy forbade my allying myself with an assassin, however excellent a husband and father he might be. An extraordinary fatality impelled me to obtain introductions to the houses where I knew that I was likely to meet Victorine. Often, after I had pledged my word to myself to give up seeking her society, I found myself by her side that very evening. My enjoyment was unbounded. My legitimate love, overflowing with chimerical remorse, had the flavor of a criminal

passion. I despised myself for bowing to Taillefer, when he happened to be with his daughter; but I bowed to him! Unhappily, Victorine is not simply a lovely young woman; she is well-informed, abounding in talent and charms, without the slightest pedantry, without the slightest tincture of conceit. Her conversation is reserved, and her character has a melancholy fascination which no one can resist; she loves me, or at least she allows me to think so; she has a certain smile which she wears only for me; and for me her voice becomes sweeter than ever. Oh! she does love me! but she adores her father, she praises loudly his goodness, his gentleness, his exquisite qualities. Those eulogies from her are like so many dagger-thrusts in my heart. One day, I found myself almost an accessory to the crime upon which the opulence of the Taillefer family is based: I determined to ask for Victorine's hand.—Thereupon I fled, I travelled, I went to Germany, to Andernach. But I returned. I found Victorine pale, and she had grown thin. If I had found her in good health and spirits, I should have been saved. My passion was rekindled with extraordinary intensity. Fearing lest my scruples should degenerate into monomania, I resolved to convoke a sanhedrim of unsullied consciences, in order to obtain some light upon that problem of high morality and philosophy. The question had become still more complicated since my return. Two days since, therefore, I called together those of my friends to whom I attribute the greatest probity, the keenest sense of

delicacy and honor. I invited two Englishmen, a secretary of embassy, and a puritan; an ex-minister, in the maturity of his political powers; young men still under the spell of innocence; a priest, an old man; my former guardian, an ingenuous creature who rendered the most admirable account of his guardianship that ever was filed at the Palais de Justice; an advocate, a notary, a magistrate,—in short, a representative of all varieties of social opinion, and of all the practical virtues. We began by dining well, talking well, and laughing well; then, at dessert, I told my story simply, and asked for advice, concealing the name of the young lady.

"Advise me, my friends," I said in conclusion. "Discuss the question at length, as if you were discussing the draft of a proposed law. The urn and the billiard-balls will be brought to you, and you will vote for or against my marriage, with all the secrecy required for an election by ballot."

Profound silence suddenly fell upon the party. The notary declined to vote.

"There's a marriage-contract to be drawn," he said.

Wine had reduced my former guardian to silence, and it was found necessary to put him under guardianship, so that no mishap should befall him on his way home.

"I understand!" I cried. "To refuse to give an opinion is to tell me emphatically what I ought to do."

There was a general movement among my guests.

A landholder who had subscribed for General Foy's children and for his tomb exclaimed:

"'Ainsi que la vertu, le crime a ses degrés!'"*

"Magpie!" said the ex-minister to me in an undertone, nudging me with his elbow.

"Where is the difficulty?" asked a duke whose fortune consists of property confiscated from refractory Protestants at the time of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

The advocate rose.

"As a matter of law," he said, "the question submitted to us would not present the slightest difficulty. Monsieur le duc is right!" cried the mouthpiece of the law. "Is there no such thing as prescription? Where should we all be if we had to go back to the origin of fortunes? This is a matter of conscience. If you insist upon carrying the cause before some tribunal, go to the tribunal of penitence."

The incarnation of the Code held his peace, and drank a glass of champagne. The man whose mission it is to interpret the Gospel, the worthy priest, rose.

"God has made us weak," he said, firmly. "If you love the heiress of the crime, marry her, but content yourself with the property that comes from the father's wife, and give the father's to the poor."

"But," cried one of those pitiless cavillers whom

*"No less than virtue, crime hath its degrees!"

we meet so often in society, "perhaps the father made a wealthy marriage only because he was rich himself. So, you see, the very least of his successes is still the fruit of his crime!"

"This discussion is in itself a sentence! There are some things a man doesn't discuss," cried my former guardian, who thought that he was enlightening the meeting by that drunken sally.

"True!" said the secretary of embassy.

"True!" cried the priest.

Those two men did not understand.

A doctrinaire rose, who had lacked only a hundred and fifty votes out of a hundred and fifty-five votes cast at a recent election.

"Messieurs, this phenomenal accident of intellectual nature is one of those which depart most widely from the normal state of society," said he. "Therefore the decision we are to form must be a fact outside of our consciences, a sudden conception, an illuminating judgment, a fleeting suggestion of our private apprehension, not unlike the flashes which constitute the sense of taste.—Let us vote."

"Vote! vote!" cried my other guests.

I caused a white and a red ball to be handed to each. The white, symbol of virginity, was to proscribe my marriage, the red ball to signify approval of it. I abstained from voting as a matter of delicacy. My friends were seventeen in number, so that nine would be a majority. Each of them went and deposited a ball in the long-necked wicker basket in

which numbered balls were shaken when the players drew for turns at pool, and we were stirred by the keenest curiosity, for there was something decidedly original in this ballot of purified morals. When the votes were examined, I found nine white balls! That result did not surprise me; but it occurred to me to count the number of young men of my own age among my judges. Those casuists numbered nine, they had all had the same thought.

"Oho!" I said to myself, "there is secret unanimity for marriage and equal unanimity in forbidding me to marry! How am I to extricate myself from the dilemma?"

"Where does the father-in-law live?" thoughtlessly inquired one of my schoolmates, less cunning than the rest.

"There is no father-in-law!" I cried. "Formerly my conscience spoke loudly enough to make your judgment unnecessary. And if its voice has grown weaker to-day, here is the explanation of my cowardice. Two months since, I received this seductive epistle."

I showed them the following invitation, which I took from my portfolio:

You are invited to be present at the funeral services and burial of

MONSIEUR JEAN-FRÉDÉRIC TAILLEFER,

of the house of Taillefer et Cie, former contractor for supplies, in his lifetime Chevalier of the Legion of

Honor and of the Golden Spur, captain in the first company of grenadiers of the second legion of the National Guard of Paris, deceased on May first, at his hôtel Rue Joubert—Services will be at—etc.

On behalf . . . , etc.

"Now what am I to do?" I continued. "I will put the question to you in the broadest way. There is certainly a pool of blood in Mademoiselle Taillefer's estates, her father's inheritance is a vast *Aceldama*—I am aware of it! But Prosper Magnan left no heirs; it was utterly impossible to find the family of the pin-manufacturer murdered at Andernach. To whom should the fortune be restored? And should she restore the whole fortune? Have I the right to divulge a secret surprised in that way, to add a murdered man's head to an innocent girl's dowry, to cause her bad dreams, to deprive her of a sweet illusion, to kill her father for her a second time by saying to her: 'All your louis are stained with blood?' I borrowed the *Dictionary of Cases of Conscience* from an old priest and I found no solution of my doubts there. Shall I found a religious establishment for the souls of Prosper Magnan, Walhenfer, and Taillefer? We are in the middle of the nineteenth century! Shall I build a hospital, or found a prize for virtue? the prize will be awarded to knaves! As for the majority of our hospitals, it seems to me that they have become to-day the protectors of vice! Moreover, do such investments, which confer more or less gratification upon the vanity, constitute

expiation? and do I owe them? Again, I love, and I love passionately. My love is my life! If I propose, for no apparent motive, to a girl accustomed to luxurious living, to elegant surroundings, to a life fruitful in the enjoyment of art, a girl who loves to listen lazily at the Bouffons to Rossini's music—if I propose to her to divest herself of fifteen hundred thousand francs in favor of stupid old men and imaginary scrofulous people, she will turn her back on me with a laugh, or her confidential maid will take me for a wretched joker; if, in an ecstasy of passion, I extol the charms of a modest life and my little house on the banks of the Loire, if I ask her to sacrifice her life in Paris in the name of our love, in the first place, it will be a virtuous falsehood; in the second place, I may, perhaps, find it an unfortunate experiment and lose the heart of that girl, who is fond of dancing, and wild over fine clothes, and over me for the moment. She will be snatched from me by some spruce, slender officer, who will have a well-curled moustache, will play the piano, sing the praises of Lord Byron and ride prettily.—What am I to do? Advise me, messieurs, in Heaven's name!"

The honest man, that species of puritan not unlike Jeanie Deans's father, whom I have already mentioned to you, and who had not spoken a word thus far, shrugged his shoulders as he said:

"You idiot, why did you ask him if he was from Beauvais?"

Paris, May 1831.

MASTER CORNELIUS

TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE GEORGES MNISZECH

Some jealous individual may think, upon seeing this page made resplendent by one of the most venerable and illustrious of Sarmatian names, that I am trying, as jewellers do, to give value to a recent work by an antique jewel, a device that is much in vogue to-day; but you yourself, and some few others, my dear count, will understand that my purpose is to pay my debt to talent, to memory, and to friendship.

*

On All-Saints' Day, in 1479, at the moment that this narrative begins, the vesper service was coming to an end at the cathedral of Tours. The archbishop, Hélie de Bourdeilles, had risen from his chair to pronounce the benediction upon the faithful. The sermon had lasted a long time, night had fallen during the service, and the most profound darkness reigned in certain portions of that beautiful church, whose two towers were still unfinished. A goodly number of wax tapers were burning, however, in honor of the saints, upon the triangular stands provided for the reception of those pious offerings, whose value and significance have never been sufficiently explained. The candles upon each altar, and all the candelabra in the choir, were lighted. Unequally distributed through the forest of pillars and arches that sustain the three naves of the cathedral, those masses of brilliancy hardly lighted the immense structure, for, by projecting the black shadows of the pillars across the galleries, they produced a thousand fantastic effects, which intensified the gloom that enshrouded the arches and recesses and lateral chapels, which were dark enough in broad daylight. The congregation presented effects no less picturesque. Some forms were outlined so faintly in the chiaro-oscuro, that they might have been taken for phantoms; while others, touched by detached rays

of light, attracted the eye like the principal faces in a picture. Statues seemed to be endowed with life, men seemed to be petrified. Here and there, eyes gleamed in the shadow of the pillars, the stone reflected keen glances, the marbles spoke, the arches echoed deep sighs, the whole edifice was instinct with life. The existence of nations contains no more solemn scenes, no moments of greater majesty. Man, generally speaking, requires movement to produce poetic works; but in those hours of religious thoughts, when human wealth of intellect is married to celestial grandeurs, results of incredible sublimity are achieved in silence; there is terror in the bended knees, there is hope in the clasped hands. The concert of sentiments in which all those souls pour forth their aspirations heavenward produces an inexplicable spiritual phenomenon. The mystic exaltation of the assembled faithful reacts upon each one of them, the weakest is borne along upon the waves of that ocean of love and faith. Thus prayer, an electric power, forces our nature out of itself. That involuntary union of all those wills, all prostrate on the ground, all exalted to the skies, contains doubtless the secret of the magic influence possessed by the chanting of the priests, and the melodious strains of the organ, the perfumes and the splendor of the altar, the voices of the throng, and its silent contemplation. We should not be surprised, therefore, to see, in the Middle Ages, so many love-affairs inaugurated in church, after long outbursts of religious frenzy,—love-affairs which were conducted in many

instances with little sanctity, but in which the woman ended, as always, by doing penance. In those days, the religious sentiment certainly had some affinity with love, it was its active principle or its end. Indeed, love was a form of religion, it had its admirable fanaticism, its ingenuous superstitions, its sublime devotion, which corresponded with the same characteristics of Christianity. The morals of the epoch sufficiently explain the alliance of religion and love. In the first place, people rarely met except in front of the altar. Lords and vassals, men and women, were equal in no other place. There only could lovers meet and correspond. Moreover, the church festivals were the principal spectacles of the time; a woman's soul was more deeply moved beneath the cathedral arches than it is to-day at a ball or at the opera. And do not powerful emotions lead all women to love? Thus, by taking an active part in life, by associating itself in all its acts, religion became an accomplice of virtue and vice alike. Religion had made its way into science, into politics, into oratory, into crime, into the regal power, beneath the skin of the sick man and the pauper; it was everywhere. These semi-scientific observations will, perhaps, confirm the accuracy of this Study, certain details of which may alarm the finished morality of our age, which is a trifle too *high-necked*, as everyone knows.

As the chant of the priests came to an end, when the last notes of the organ blended with the vibrations of the *Amen!* from the lusty throats of

the singers,—while a faint, murmuring echo still lingered under the distant arches, and the devout congregation awaited the prelate's blessing,—a bourgeois, in haste to return home, or dreading for his purse's sake the confusion of the general exodus, stole noiselessly from the church at the risk of being esteemed a bad Catholic. A gentleman who was standing beside one of the huge pillars that surround the choir, where he had been lost, as it were, in the darkness, made haste to take the place left vacant by the prudent citizen. As he did so, he hastily concealed his face behind the feathers that adorned his tall gray cap, and knelt upon the chair with an air of contrition that even an inquisitor might have taken for sincere. After scrutinizing the man with some care, his neighbors seemed to recognize him, and returned to their prayers with a gesture by which they all expressed the same thought, a satirical, mocking thought, a mute disapproval. Two old women shook their heads as they exchanged a glance which plunged into the future.

The chair of which the young man had taken possession stood near a chapel placed between two pillars, and isolated by an iron grating. At that time, the chapter leased to certain seignorial families, and to some wealthy bourgeois families as well, at a very considerable rental, the exclusive privilege, for themselves and their retainers, of occupying at all services the lateral chapels extending for the length of the two small naves that extend around

the cathedral. That species of simony is practised to this day. A woman had her chapel in the church as she takes a box at the Italiens to-day. The tenants of those privileged places were required, in addition, to look after the altars that were set aside for them. Each of them, therefore, made it a matter of pride to embellish his special altar most splendidly, a display of vanity to which the church was readily reconciled. In the chapel in question, a young lady was kneeling, near the grating, on a handsome carpet of red velvet with golden fringe, very near the chair recently vacated by the bourgeois. A silver-gilt lamp, hanging from the arch of the chapel, in front of a sumptuously decorated altar, cast its pale light upon the Book of Hours which the young lady held. The book trembled violently in her hand when the young man took his place beside her.

"*Amen!*"

After that response, chanted in a sweet but painfully agitated voice, which fortunately was drowned in the general chorus, she added hastily, and in an undertone:

"You are ruining me!"

The words were uttered with an accent of innocence which a man of any delicacy of sentiment must have obeyed; they went straight to the heart and pierced it; but the stranger, carried away, doubtless, by one of those paroxysms of passion which stifle the conscience, remained upon his chair and raised his head slightly, so that he could glance into the chapel.

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truth because he was capable of suspecting it. His yellow forehead was wrinkled like the forehead of men who are accustomed to believe in nothing, to weigh everything, and who, like a miser putting his gold pieces in the scales, seek to fathom the exact meaning and effect of human actions. He had a solidly-built, bony frame, and seemed to be of a nervous, and therefore irritable, disposition; in a word, you would have said that he was an ogre who had mistaken his profession. Inevitable peril, therefore, was in store for the young lady when her awe-inspiring lord should awake. That jealous husband could not fail to notice the difference between the old bourgeois, at whose presence he had taken no offence, and the new-comer, a graceful, dandified young courtier.

"*Deliver us from evil!*" she said, trying to make the unfeeling youth understand her fears.

He raised his head and looked at her. There were tears in his eyes, tears of love or of despair. At that sight, the lady trembled, she was lost. Doubtless both of them had long resisted, and, perhaps, could resist no longer a love that was increased from day to day by invincible obstacles, nurtured by terror, strengthened by youth. The woman was only passably beautiful, but her pale complexion told of secret suffering that made her interesting. She had a distinguished figure, too, and the loveliest hair in the world. Watched by a tiger, as she was, she risked her life, perhaps, in uttering a word, in allowing her hand to be pressed,

in welcoming a glance. If love had never been more deeply implanted in two hearts, more rapturously enjoyed, never was love fraught with greater peril. It was easy to understand that, to those two creatures, the air, the slightest sounds, the footsteps on the flags, the trifles most devoid of interest to other men and women, presented tangible qualities, special properties which they divined. It may be that love enabled them to find faithful interpreters even in the cold hands of the old priest to whom they went to confess their sins, or from whom they received the consecrated wafer on approaching the holy table. Profound love, love cut into the heart like a scar in the body which one must carry through life. When the two looked in each other's eyes, the woman seemed to say to her lover: "Let us die, but let us love!" and the gallant seemed to reply: "We will love and we will not die." Thereupon, with a melancholy gesture, she pointed to an old duenna and two pages. The duenna was asleep. The pages were young, and seemed quite indifferent to what might befall their master, either of good or evil.

"Do not be frightened when we go out, and let events take their course."

Hardly had the gentleman uttered these words in a low tone than the old nobleman's hand fell upon the hilt of his sword. At the touch of the cold steel, the old man awoke with a start; his yellow eyes were instantly turned upon his wife. By a faculty rarely accorded even to men of genius, his mind

was as active and his ideas as clear as if he had not slept. He was jealous. Although the young cavalier had one eye upon his mistress, he was watching the husband with the other; he rose quickly, and glided out of sight behind the pillar the instant that the old man's hand moved; then he disappeared, as light as a bird. The lady quickly lowered her eyes, pretended to read, and tried to appear calm; but she could not prevent her face from flushing, nor her heart from beating with unaccustomed violence. The old nobleman heard the sound of the fierce pulsations which echoed through the chapel, and he noticed the extraordinarily brilliant color that overspread his wife's cheeks and brow and eyelids; he glanced cautiously about, but, seeing no one whom he could suspect, he said:

"Of what are you thinking, my love?"

"The odor of the incense makes me ill," she replied.

"Ah! is it bad to-day?" rejoined her husband.

Notwithstanding that query, the crafty old man seemed to place credence in that pretext; but he suspected some secret treachery, and resolved to keep closer watch than ever upon his treasure. The benediction was pronounced. The multitude, without waiting for the end of the *Secula seculorum*, rushed toward the doors of the church like a torrent. According to his custom, the nobleman prudently waited until the first rush had subsided somewhat, then he left the chapel, placing the duenna in front with the younger page, who carried the torch; he

took his wife on his arm and bade the other page follow them.

Just as the old nobleman reached the side door opening into the eastern portion of the cloister, through which he usually went out, a wave of people broke from the crowd that obstructed the main doorway and flowed back toward the small nave where he and his party were; the compact mass made it impossible for him to retrace his steps. He and his wife were forced outside by the resistless pressure of that multitude. The husband tried to go first, vigorously drawing the lady after him by her arm; but he was pulled violently into the street, and his wife was torn from him by a stranger. The terrible hunchback instantly realized that he had fallen into an ambuscade prepared long before. Regretting that he had slept so long, he summoned all his strength, seized his wife again with one hand by the sleeve of her dress and tried to cling to the door with the other. But the ardor of love carried the day over the frenzy of jealousy. The young man seized his mistress by the waist, and snatched her away with such suddenness and such desperate force that the silk and gold brocade and whalebone parted noisily. The sleeve alone was left in the husband's hands. A roar that a lion might have uttered drowned the cries of the multitude, and soon they heard a terrible voice shouting these words:

"Help, Poitiers! To the main doorway, servants of the Comte de Saint-Vallier!—Help! this way!"

And Comte Aymar de Poitiers, Sire de Saint-Vallier, tried to draw his sword and cut his way through the crowd; but he saw that he was surrounded, hemmed in by thirty or forty gentlemen whom it were dangerous to wound. Several of them, who were of the highest rank, answered him with jests as they drew him into the passage-way of the cloister. The abductor had, with the rapidity of the lightning-flash, carried the countess into an open chapel, where he placed her upon a wooden bench behind a confessional. By the light of the tapers burning before the image of the saint to whom the chapel was dedicated, they gazed at each other a moment in silence, pressed each other's hands, equally amazed at their audacity. The countess had not the cruel courage to reproach the young man for the bold enterprise to which they owed that first, hazardous moment of happiness.

"Will you fly with me to some neighboring country?" said the gentleman, eagerly. "I have close at hand two English jennets able to travel thirty leagues without rest."

"Ah!" she cried, softly, "where in all the world will you find a place of refuge for the daughter of King Louis XI.?"

"True," replied the young man, abashed to think that he had not foreseen that difficulty.

"Then why did you take me from my husband?" she asked, with a sort of terror.

"Alas!" replied the gallant, "I did not anticipate the embarrassment that I experience, now that I am

by your side, now that I hear your voice. I have formed two or three plans, and now it seems to me that everything is accomplished, since you are before me."

"But I am lost!" said the countess.

"We are saved!" replied the young man, with the blind enthusiasm of love. "Listen to me—"

"This will cost me my life," she said, allowing the tears to fall that were gathering in her eyes. "The count will kill me to-night, perhaps! But go to the king, tell him of the tortures his daughter has endured these last five years. He loved me well when I was small and called me, laughingly: *Marie-filled-with-grace*, because I was ugly. Ah! if he knew what manner of man he has given me to, he would be terribly angry! I have never dared complain, through pity for the count. Indeed, how could my voice reach the king? Even my confessor is a spy of Saint-Vallier. So I have consented to this blameworthy abduction, in the hope of obtaining a defender. But can I trust to— Oh!" she exclaimed, checking herself and turning pale, "here is the page!"

The poor countess made a sort of veil with her hands to conceal her face.

"Have no fear," said the young nobleman, "he is bought! You may make use of him in perfect security, he belongs to me. When the count comes in search of you, he will warn us of his approach.— In this confessional," he added in a low tone, "is a canon who is my friend, who will be supposed to

have rescued you from the tumult, and placed you in this chapel under his protection. So that every precaution has been taken to deceive Saint-Vallier."

At those words, the countess's tears ceased to flow, but a melancholy expression passed across her face.

"You cannot deceive him!" she said. "This evening he will know everything. Beware of his blows! Go to Plessis, see the king, tell him that—"

She hesitated. But, as the recollection of some outrage gave her the courage to confess the secrets of her married life, she continued:

"Yes, tell him that, in order to make himself master of me, the count has me bled in both arms and thus exhausts my strength.—Say that he has dragged me by the hair; say that I am a prisoner; say that—"

Her heart swelled, the sobs died away in her throat, a tear or two fell from her eyes; and in her agitation she allowed the young man to kiss her hands while his lips uttered incoherent words.

"No one can speak to the king, my poor darling! Although I am the nephew of the grand-master of the cross-bowmen, I shall not be admitted to Plessis to-night. My dear lady, my beautiful queen!—God! how she has suffered!—Let me say two words to you, Marie, or we are lost!"

"What will become of me?" she cried.

She noticed a picture of the Virgin on the black wall, with the light from the lamp falling full upon it.

"Holy Mother of God, advise us!" she exclaimed.

"To-night," rejoined the young nobleman, "I will be with you."

"How?" she asked, innocently.

They were in such imminent danger that their softest words seemed devoid of love.

"To-night," he replied, "I propose to offer myself as an apprentice to Master Cornelius, the king's silversmith. I have succeeded in procuring a letter of recommendation which will ensure my reception. His house is next yours. Once under that old villain's roof, I shall easily find the way to your apartments with the aid of a silken ladder."

"Oh!" she ejaculated, petrified with horror, "if you love me, do not go to Master Cornelius!"

"Ah!" he cried, pressing her to his heart with all the strength one feels at his age, "you do love me, do you not?"

"Yes," she said. "Are you not my only hope? You are a gentleman, I entrust my happiness to you!—Indeed," she continued, looking at him with dignity, "I am too unhappy for you to betray my confidence. But to what purpose is all this? Go, leave me to die, rather than go to Master Cornelius! Do you not know that all his apprentices—?"

"Have been hanged," the gentleman interrupted, with a laugh. "Think you that his treasures tempt me?"

"Oh! do not go there! you will be the victim of some witchcraft—"

"I could not purchase too dearly the happiness

of serving you," he replied, darting at her a fiery glance which made her lower her eyes.

"And my husband?" she said.

"Here is something that will put him to sleep," replied the young man, drawing a little phial from his belt.

"Not forever?" asked the countess, trembling.

The gentleman's only reply was a gesture of horror.

"I should have challenged him to single combat long ago, if he had not been so old," he added. "God forbid that I should ever rid you of him by poison!"

"Forgive me," said the countess, blushing. "I am cruelly punished for my sins. In a moment of desperation, I tried to kill the count; I feared that you might have had the same desire. I am deeply grieved that I have not been able as yet to confess that evil thought; but I was afraid that it would be disclosed to him, and that he would revenge himself upon me.—Do I make you ashamed of me?" she continued, wounded by the young man's silence; "I deserve the reproof."

She threw the phial fiercely to the floor and shattered it.

"Do not come," she cried, "the count is a light sleeper. It is my duty to await help from Heaven. That I will do!"

She attempted to leave the chapel.

"Ah!" cried the young man, "say the word and I will kill him, madame! You will see me to-night."

"I was very wise to destroy that drug," she replied, in a voice made almost inaudible by the blissful consciousness that she was so ardently loved. "The fear of awakening my husband will save us from ourselves."

"I pledge my life to you," said the young man, pressing her hand.

"If it be the king's will, the Pope will find a way to annul my marriage. Then we could be united," she rejoined, with a glance overflowing with blissful hopes.

"Monseigneur comes!" cried the page, running toward them.

The young man, astonished to find how short a time he was able to pass with his mistress, and surprised by the count's celerity, stole a kiss which his mistress had not the heart to refuse.

"Until to-night!" he said, as he darted from the chapel.

Favored by the darkness, the lover made his way to the main doorway, gliding from pillar to pillar, along the dark shadow projected by each huge column. Suddenly an aged canon rose from the confessional, took his place beside the countess, and softly closed the grating, in front of which the page strode gravely to and fro, with the self-assurance of an assassin. A bright light announced the count's approach. Attended by several friends and retainers carrying torches, he held his naked sword in his hand. His threatening eyes seemed to pierce the dense shadows and to penetrate the darkest corners of the cathedral.

"Madame is there, monseigneur," said the page, stepping forward to meet him.

Sire de Saint-Vallier found his wife kneeling at the foot of the altar, and the canon standing beside her, reading his breviary. At that sight, he shook the grating violently, as if to feed his rage.

"What do you seek, with drawn sword, in church?" demanded the canon.

"Monsieur is my husband, father," said the countess.

The priest took the key from his sleeve and opened the chapel. The count, almost in spite of himself, glanced around the confessional and entered; then he listened intently amid the profound silence of the cathedral.

"Monsieur," said his wife, "you owe your thanks to this venerable canon who gave me shelter here."

Sire de Saint-Vallier became white with rage, and dared not look at his friends, who had come there to laugh at him rather than to assist him.

"I thank God, father," he replied, briefly; "I shall find a way to reward you!"

He took his wife by the arm, and, not allowing her to complete her reverence to the canon, made a sign to his people and left the church, without a word to those gentlemen who had accompanied him. There was something savage in his silence. Impatient to be at home, intent upon methods of discovering the truth, he strode through the tortuous streets which at that time separated the cathedral from the gate of La Chancellerie, where stood the

noble mansion, then recently constructed by the Chancellor Juvénal des Ursins, on the site of an ancient fortification which Charles VII. had presented to that faithful servitor in acknowledgment of his glorious services. There commenced a street since called Rue de la Scéellerie in memory of the seals which were there for so long a time. It connected the ancient city of Tours with the village of Châteauneuf, where the famous Abbey Saint-Martin, of which so many kings were simple canons, was located. A hundred years before, after long debates, that village had been annexed to the city. Many streets adjacent to Rue de la Scéellerie, which form the centre of modern Tours, were already erected; but the finest mansions, notably that of the treasurer, Xancoings, a house which is still in existence on Rue du Commerce, were situated in the commune of Châteauneuf.

It was in that direction that Sire de Saint-Vallier's torch-bearers led the way, toward that part of the town which lay along the banks of the Loire; he followed his people mechanically, darting from time to time a threatening glance at his wife and at the page, trying to surprise a significant glance between them which would throw some light upon that maddening adventure. At last, the count reached Rue du Mûrier, where his house was. When the little procession had entered and the heavy door was closed, profound silence reigned in that narrow street, on which some few noblemen lived; for that new quarter of the city was in the neighborhood of

Plessis, the favorite abode of the king, which the courtiers were thus able to reach in a very short time.

The last house on that street was also the last in the town, and belonged to Master Cornelius Hoogworst, an old Brabantine merchant, upon whom King Louis XI. bestowed his confidence in the financial transactions which his astute policy compelled him to engage in outside his kingdom. For reasons connected with the tyranny he exercised over his wife, the Comte de Saint-Vallier had taken up his abode in a house adjoining the quarters of this Master Cornelius. A glance at the topography of the place will explain the advantages that location might afford a jealous husband. The count's house, called the Hôtel de Poitiers, had a garden bounded on the north by the wall and the moat which encircled the ancient village of Châteauneuf, and along which ran the embankment recently constructed by Louis XI. between Tours and Plessis. On that side, watch-dogs guarded the approach to the house, which was separated by an extensive courtyard from the nearest houses on the east, and on the west adjoined Master Cornelius's house. The street front faced the south. Being thus isolated on three sides, the abode of the crafty and suspicious nobleman could be invaded only by the inmates of the Brabantine establishment, the roof and gutters of which were contiguous to those of the Hôtel de Poitiers. The narrow windows on the street, recessed in the stone, were protected by iron bars; and the door, which was low and arched

like the wickets in our oldest prisons, was solid enough to withstand any test. A stone bench, which served as a horse-block, stood beside the porch. Glancing at the profile of the houses occupied by Master Cornelius and the Comte de Poitiers, it was easy to believe that the two had been built by the same architect and were intended for the occupancy of tyrants. Both were of forbidding aspect, resembling small fortresses, and could be defended with ease for a long time against a maddened populace. Their corners were protected by turrets similar to those which antiquarians remark in certain towns to which the hammer of the destroyer has not yet found its way. The door and window openings, being quite narrow, made it possible to give an enormous power of resistance to the barred shutters and the heavy doors. The uprisings and civil wars which were so frequent in those days of discord amply justified all these precautions.

When six o'clock struck on the clock of the Abbey Saint-Martin, the countess's lover passed before the hôtel de Poitiers, paused there a moment, and listened to the noise made by the count's servants at their supper in an apartment on the lower floor. After glancing up at the room which he presumed to be that of his mistress, he went on toward the door of the adjoining house. Everywhere, as he came along, the young nobleman had heard the joyful echoes of the banquets in progress in many of the houses in honor of the festival of All Saints. From all the poorly-fitted windows beams of light escaped;

smoke poured from the chimneys, and the delicious odor of the cookshops enlivened the streets. The evening service at an end, the whole city made merry, and gave forth sounds which the imagination can conceive better than words can describe. But in that spot absolute silence reigned, for those two houses were the abode of two passions which never make merry. The open fields beyond were silent, and those two mute houses, lying in the shadow of the towers of the Abbey Saint-Martin, apart from the other houses, and at the most tortuous end of the street, resembled a hospital for lepers. The building opposite them, belonging to state criminals, was under the ban. A young man might readily be impressed by that abrupt contrast. And so, on the point of embarking upon a terribly hazardous enterprise, the gentleman stood, lost in thought, in front of the usurer's house, recalling all the anecdotes concerning the life of Master Cornelius, which had caused the countess's deadly alarm. At that epoch, everybody, the bravest warrior, even a lover, trembled at the word sorcery. There were but few minds then impervious to extraordinary events, or cold to marvellous tales. The lover of the Comtesse de Saint-Vallier,—one of the children born to Louis XI. by Madame de Sassenage in Dauphiné,—however intrepid he might be, would be likely to look twice before entering a house reputed to be bewitched.

The story of Master Cornelius Hoogworst will adequately explain the sense of security the usurer had inspired in the Sire de Saint-Vallier, the terror

manifested by the countess, and the hesitation which caused the lover to pause. But, in order that nineteenth-century readers may thoroughly understand how events apparently commonplace came to be looked upon as supernatural, and that they may share the terrors of those ancient times, it becomes necessary to interrupt this narrative in order to cast a rapid glance over the previous adventures of Master Cornelius.

*

Cornelius Hoogworst, one of the wealthiest merchants of Ghent, having incurred the enmity of Charles, Duc de Bourgogne, had found an asylum and protection at the court of Louis XI. The king realized the favors that he might obtain from a man connected with the leading houses of Flanders, Venice, and the Levant; he ennobled Master Cornelius, naturalized him, and flattered him, a thing that Louis XI. very rarely did. Moreover, the monarch pleased the Fleming as much as the Fleming pleased the monarch. Cunning, suspicious, avaricious both; equally politic, equally well-informed, and both superior to the age in which they lived, they understood each other marvellously well; they laid aside and resumed with equal facility, one his conscience, the other his piety—; they worshipped the same Virgin, one from conviction, the other from flattery; lastly, if we are to believe the jealous assertions of Olivier le Daim and Tristan, the king went to the usurer's house to seek such entertainment as Louis XI. affected. History has taken pains to hand down to us the licentious tastes of that monarch, who was not averse to debauchery. The old Fleming doubtless derived enjoyment and profit from catering to his royal client's capricious desires.

Cornelius had lived in Tours for nine years. During those nine years, extraordinary occurrences,

which had made him the object of general execration, had taken place under his roof. On his arrival there, he expended a considerable sum upon his house in order to ensure the safety of his treasures. The cunning contrivances secretly made for him by the locksmiths of the town, the extraordinary precautions that he took to smuggle them into his house in a way to make certain of their discretion, were for a long while the subjects of innumerable marvellous tales which fascinated the gossips of Touraine. The old man's peculiar artifices led to the supposition that he was possessed of oriental wealth. Wherefore, the story-tellers of that province, the home of the fairy-tale in France, constructed chambers of gold and precious stones in the Fleming's house, not omitting to attribute the source of that vast fortune to compacts with sorcerers. Master Cornelius had originally brought with him two Flemish valets, an old woman, and a young apprentice of attractive and winning countenance; that young man acted as his secretary, cashier, courier, and general factotum. During the first year after his establishment in Tours, a considerable theft was committed in his house. Judicial investigation proved that the crime was committed by an inmate of the house. The old miser caused his two servants and his clerk to be imprisoned. The young man was weak; he died under the torture, stoutly protesting his innocence. The two servants confessed the crime in order to avoid the torture; but when the magistrate asked them where the stolen money was hidden, they made no

answer, were subjected to the question, tried, convicted, and hanged. On their way to the scaffold, they persisted in asserting their innocence, according to the usual custom of men who are hanged.

The city of Tours discussed that strange affair for a long while. The criminals were Flemings, so that the interest which the two poor wretches and the clerk had aroused quickly subsided. In those days, wars and seditious outbreaks provided constant excitement, and the drama of the day made the drama of the day before seem a small matter. More grieved by the enormous loss he had sustained than by the death of his three servants, Master Cornelius was left alone with the old Flemish woman, who was his sister. He obtained from the king the privilege of using the royal couriers for his private business, placed his mules at a mule-driver's in the vicinity, and lived thenceforth in the most profound solitude, seeing almost nobody at all except the king, transacting his business through the medium of Jews, shrewd calculators, who served him loyally in order to secure his all-powerful protection.

Some time after this adventure, the king himself procured for his old *torçonnier* a young orphan in whom he took much interest. Louis XI. called Master Cornelius familiarly by that old-fashioned name, which, under the reign of Saint Louis, signified a money-lender, a collector of taxes, a man who forced money out of people by violent means. The epithet *tortionnaire*, still in vogue at the Palais de Justice, is practically synonymous with *torçonnier*,

which was often written *tortionneur*. The poor boy applied himself faithfully to the broker's affairs, succeeded in pleasing him, and won his goodwill. During one winter's night, the diamonds deposited with Master Cornelius by the King of England, as security for a loan of three hundred thousand francs, were stolen, and suspicion fell upon the orphan; Louis XI. was the more severe in dealing with him, because he had made himself responsible for his fidelity. So the poor fellow was hanged after a very summary examination by the grand provost. No one dared to go to Master Cornelius to learn the art of banking and brokerage. However, two young men of the city, natives of Touraine, thoroughly honest and desirous of wealth, entered his employ in succession. Thefts of considerable amounts coincided with the admission of the two young men to the *torçonnier's* house; the attendant circumstances and the manner in which the crimes were committed proved conclusively that the thieves had a secret understanding with the inmates of the house; it was impossible not to accuse the new-comers. The old Fleming, becoming more and more suspicious and vindictive, instantly reported these affairs to Louis XI., who instructed his grand provost to investigate them. In each case, the prosecution was promptly begun and more promptly concluded. The local pride of the people of Tours secretly blamed Tristan's speedy action. Guilty or not, the two young men were looked upon as victims, and Cornelius as an executioner. The two bereaved families were highly

esteemed, their complaints were listened to; and, from conjecture to conjecture, they succeeded in making people believe in the innocence of all those whom the king's silversmith had sent to the gallows. Some declared that the cruel miser was imitating the king, that he was trying to erect a wall of terror and the gibbet between the world and himself; that he had never been robbed; that these deplorable executions were the result of cold-blooded scheming, and that he wished to avoid the necessity of fearing for his treasures.

The first effect of these popular rumors was that Cornelius was left alone; the people of Tours treated him like a man with the plague, called him the *tortionnaire*, and dubbed his house *Malemaison*. Even if the usurer could have found a stranger bold enough to enter his employ, the people of the town would have prevented him by their assertions. The opinion most favorable to Master Cornelius was that of those people who looked upon him as a man with whom it was fatal to be associated. He inspired in some instinctive terror; from others he compelled that profound respect which men feel for a power without bounds or for great wealth; to many persons he had the attraction of mystery. His manner of life, his appearance, and the king's favor justified all the tales that were told concerning him. Cornelius travelled much in foreign countries after the death of his persecutor, the Duc de Bourgogne; and during his absence his house was guarded by men from the king's Scotch body-guard. This royal

solicitude led the courtiers to believe that the old man had bequeathed his fortune to Louis XI. The usurer went out very little, and the noblemen of the court paid him frequent visits; he lent them money quite freely, but he was capricious: on certain days he would not let them have a sou; the next day he would offer them immense sums, always requiring, however, a high rate of interest and good security. Being a good Catholic, he went regularly to service, and he always went to Saint-Martin very early; as he had purchased the fee of a chapel there, he was separated from other Christians there as elsewhere. In those days, there was a popular saying, which was long current at Tours: "You have passed the usurer, some disaster will happen to you." *You have passed the usurer* explained sudden illnesses, involuntary fits of depression, and ill-fortune generally. Even at the court, Cornelius was accredited with that fatal influence which Italian, Spanish, and Asiatic superstitions have named the *evil-eye*. Except for the awe-inspiring power of Louis XI., which was extended over that house like a cloak, the people would have demolished the Malemaison on Rue du Mûrier on the slightest pretext. And yet the first mulberry-trees raised in Tours had been set out on Master Cornelius's land, and at that time the natives looked upon him as a good genius. How little reliance can be placed on popular favor! Some noblemen who happened to meet Master Cornelius outside of France were surprised at his good-humor. At Tours, he was always gloomy and pensive; but

he always returned. An inexplicable power led him back to his dark house on Rue du Mûrier. Like the snail, whose life is so inextricably linked with that of his shell, he confessed to the king that he was ill at ease everywhere except beneath the vermiculated stonework and behind the locks and bolts of his little fortress, although he knew that, if Louis XI. should die, it would be the most dangerous spot on earth for him.

"The devil is amusing himself at the expense of our gossip the *torçonnier*," said Louis XI., to his barber, a few days before the festival of All Saints. "He complains again of having been robbed. But he can hang no one now unless he hangs himself. The old vagabond actually asked me if I had not carried away by mistake a chain of rubies that he desired to sell me! *Pasques-Dieu!* I told him that I did not steal what I could take."

"Was he afraid?" queried the barber.

"Misers are afraid of but one thing," replied the king. "My gossip the *torçonnier* is well aware that I shall not despoil him without a reason; otherwise I should be unjust, and never have I done aught save that which was just and necessary."

"But the old villain overcharges you," said the barber.

"You would like right well to have it so, eh?" queried the king, with a mischievous glance at the barber.

"*Ventre-Mahom*, sire, the inheritance would be a noble one for you and the devil to divide."

"Enough!" said the king. "Do not put bad thoughts into my head. My gossip is more faithful to me than any of those whose fortunes I have made, perhaps because he owes me nothing."

Thus for two years Master Cornelius had lived alone with his aged sister, who was supposed to be a sorceress. A tailor in the neighborhood affirmed that he had often seen her on the roof at night awaiting the hour for the witches' revels. That fact seemed the more extraordinary because the old miser always kept his sister locked in a room, the windows of which were furnished with iron bars. As he grew older, Cornelius, being robbed again and again, and fearing to be made a dupe by his fellow-men, conceived a bitter hatred for them all, except the king, for whom he had great esteem. He had become excessively misanthropic; but, as is the case with most misers, his passion for gold, the assimilation of that metal with his substance becoming more and more complete, had increased in intensity with his years. Even his sister was not exempt from suspicion, although she was even more miserly and economical than her brother, whom she surpassed in ingeniously avaricious expedients. Thus there was something problematical and mysterious about their existence. The old woman bought bread so rarely at the baker's, she appeared so little at the market, that the least credulous observers had ended by attributing to those two abnormal creatures some acquaintance with the unknown things of life. They who dabbled in alchemy said that Master Cornelius

knew how to make gold. Scientists claimed that he had discovered the universal panacea. In the minds of many country people to whom the people of the city spoke of him, Cornelius was an imaginary being, and they often came to stare at the front of his house from curiosity.

The young gentleman, sitting on the bench outside the door of the house opposite Master Cornelius's, gazed alternately at the hôtel de Poitiers and Malemaison; the moon touched the protruding portions with its silvery rays, and outlined with alternations of light and shade, the raised and sunken parts of the carving. The caprices of that pale light imparted a sinister aspect to the two buildings; it seemed that nature herself corroborated the superstitions that hovered over that abode. The young man recalled one by one all the traditions which rendered Cornelius an interesting and at the same time awesome personage. Although the intensity of his passion had decided him to enter that house and to remain there as long a time as was necessary for the accomplishment of his plans, he hesitated to venture upon the last step, well knowing that he should take it at last. But what man, in the great crises of life, does not love to listen to presentiments, to balance himself upon the edge of the abyss of the future? Like a lover worthy of loving, the young man feared lest he might die before he had received proof that the countess had forgiven his love. That secret deliberation was so painfully absorbing that he did not feel the cold whistling about his legs and

around the corners of the houses. When he entered Cornelius's house, he must lay aside his name, even as he had already laid aside the handsome garments of a nobleman. It would be impossible for him, in case any misfortune should befall him, to claim the privileges of his birth or the assistance of his friends, except under pain of ruining the Comtesse de Saint-Vallier beyond recall. If the old nobleman her husband should suspect a nocturnal visit from a lover, he was quite capable of causing her to be put to death by a slow fire in an iron cage, of killing her day by day in the depths of some strong castle. As he surveyed the wretched clothes in which he had disguised himself, the young man was ashamed. With his black leather belt, his heavy shoes, his milled stockings, his linsey-woolsey breeches, and his gray woollen doublet, he resembled the clerk of the most impecunious magistrate. For a noble of the fifteenth century it was worse than death to play the rôle of a penniless bourgeois, and to renounce the privileges of rank. But to climb to the roof of the house in which his mistress was weeping, to descend by the chimney or to crawl along the outer galleries and from gutter to gutter until he reached the window of her room; to risk his life in order to sit beside her upon a silken cushion, in front of a blazing fire, while a grim husband slept and his snoring redoubled their enjoyment; to defy heaven and earth while exchanging the most audacious of all kisses; to say not a word that might not be followed by death, or, at least, by a bloody combat:

such voluptuous visions and the romantic perils of the enterprise put an end to the young man's indecision. The more trifling the reward of his labors might be, even though he were able but to kiss the countess's hand a single time, the more promptly he resolved to put everything to the touch, impelled by the chivalrous and impassioned spirit of the age. Furthermore, he did not believe that the countess would dare refuse him the sweetest joys of love amid such mortal dangers. The adventure was too perilous, too impossible, not to be pursued to the end.

At that moment, all the bells in the city rang the curfew, in accordance with the law then fallen into desuetude, but still observed in the provinces, where all old customs are abolished slowly. Although the lights were not put out, the authorities in each quarter of the city caused the chains to be stretched along the streets. Some doors were closed, the footsteps of some belated citizens, walking in company, with their servants armed to the teeth and carrying torches, could be heard in the distance; ere long, the city, bound hand and foot, as it were, seemed to sleep, and no longer feared the attacks of malefactors except from its roofs. At that period, the roofs of houses formed a means of communication much frequented during the night. The streets were so narrow in the provinces, and in Paris too, that thieves jumped across from house to house. That hazardous employment furnished amusement to King Charles IX. in his youth, if we may believe contemporary memoirs.

Fearing lest he should be too late in applying to Master Cornelius, the young man was about to leave his place, in order to go and knock at the door of Malemaison, when, as he looked toward it, his attention was attracted by a species of vision which the writers of the time would have called a whimsey. He rubbed his eyes as if to see more clearly, and a thousand varying ideas passed through his mind at the sight. On each side of the door was a face framed by the bars of a sort of loophole. At first, he took those two faces for grotesque masks carved in the stone, they were so wrinkled, so angular, so motionless, so distorted, of such a tawny hue, that is to say, brown, and seemed to stand out so prominently; but the cold and the moonlight enabled him to distinguish the tiny white vapor that issued from the two purplish noses as they breathed; and finally he saw, in each gaunt face, under the shadow of the eyelashes, two eyes of a china-like blue, which emitted a bright flame, and resembled those of a wolf lying among the underbrush, when he hears the yelping of a pack. The restless gleam of those eyes was fixed upon him so earnestly, that, after he had endured it for the brief moment that he employed in scrutinizing that strange spectacle, he felt like a bird surprised by dogs; a feverish impulse seized upon him, but was speedily repressed. Those two watchful, suspicious faces doubtless belonged to Cornelius and his sister. Thereupon the young gentleman pretended to look about to see where he was, and to try to distinguish some directions upon a card

which he took from his pocket and attempted to read by the light of the moon; then he walked straight to the *torçonnier's* door, and knocked thrice, the blows echoing through the house as if the door were the entrance to a cavern. A dim light shone under the porch, and an eye gleamed through a small and exceedingly strong wicket.

"Who is there?"

"A friend commended to you by Oosterlinck of Bruges."

"What do you wish?"

"To enter."

"Your name?"

"Philippe Goulenoire."

"Have you credentials?"

"Here they are."

"Put them into the box."

"Where is it?"

"At the left."

Philippe Goulenoire passed the letter through the slit of an iron box, above which was a loophole.

"The deuce!" he thought, "it is plain that the king is in the habit of coming here, for they take as many precautions as at Plessis!"

He waited about fifteen minutes in the street. At the end of that time, he heard Cornelius say to his sister:

"Close the caltrops of the door."

There was a clashing of chains and of iron under the doorway. Philippe heard bolts thrown back and keys turning in locks; at last a little low door, bound

with iron, opened so as to describe the smallest angle through which a slender man could pass. At the risk of tearing his clothes, Philippe squeezed himself into rather than entered Malemaison. A toothless old woman, with a face like a rebeck, whose eyebrows resembled the handles of a kettle, and who could not have put a walnut between her nose and her hooked chin; a pale, haggard creature, with great hollows at her temples, who seemed to consist of bones and nerves exclusively, silently guided the *soi-disant* foreigner into a room on the ground-floor, while Cornelius prudently followed on behind.

"Sit you down there," she said to Philippe, pointing to a three-legged stool at the corner of a great mantel of carved stone, with no fire on the cleanly-swept hearth.

On the other side of the fireplace was a walnut table with twisted feet, upon which were ten or twelve hard, dry sippets, cut with studied parsimony, and an egg in a plate. Two stools, upon one of which the old woman took her seat, indicated that the misers were about to sup. Cornelius went and closed the iron shutters of the loopholes through which he had looked so long into the street, and returned to his place. The pretended Philippe Goulenoire thereupon watched the brother and sister as they dipped their respective sippets into the egg, turn and turn about, gravely and with the precision displayed by soldiers dipping their spoons into the porringer in measured time; but they hardly touched the egg, in order that it might last until all the sippets had

disappeared. This repast was eaten in silence. As he ate, Cornelius scrutinized the false novice with as much care and perspicacity as if he were weighing old coins. Philippe, feeling as if a cloak of ice had fallen upon his shoulders, was tempted to look about him; but, with the cunning inspired by an amorous enterprise, he resisted the temptation to cast even a further glance upon the walls; for he realized that, if Cornelius should detect it, he would not keep such an inquisitive fellow in his house. He was content, therefore, to let his eyes rest modestly, now upon the egg, now upon the old maid, and occasionally he glanced at his future master.

Louis XI.'s silversmith resembled his royal patron; he had even adopted certain of his characteristic gestures, as is not infrequently the case with people who live together on intimate terms. The Fleming's thick eyelashes almost concealed his eyes; but, when he raised them slightly, his glance was bright, penetrating, and powerful, the glance of men accustomed to silence, to whom the phenomenon of concentration of the mental powers has become familiar. His thin lips, with vertical wrinkles, gave him an indescribably cunning expression. The lower part of the face bore a vague resemblance to the muzzle of a fox; but the high, bulging forehead, seamed with wrinkles, seemed to denote great and estimable qualities, a nobility of soul, whose flight had been restrained by experience, and which the cruel lessons of life forced back undoubtedly into the most secret recesses of that extraordinary nature. Certainly, he was no

ordinary miser, and his passion served in all probability as a cloak for profound enjoyment, for secret schemes.

"What is the premium on Venice sequins?" he asked his future clerk, abruptly.

"Three-fourths at Bruges, one at Ghent."

"What is the freight on the Scheldt?"

"Three *sous Parisis*."

"Is there anything new at Ghent?"

"Liéven d'Herde's brother is ruined."

"Ah!"

Having uttered that exclamation, the old man covered his knees with one of the skirts of his *dalmatique*, a sort of black velvet gown, opening in front, with full sleeves and no collar; the rich material of which it was made glistened like a mirror. The rest of the magnificent costume, which he formerly wore as president of the court of *Parchons*,—his performance of the functions of which office had earned for him the enmity of the Duc de Bourgogne,—was naught but a mass of rags. Philippe was not cold, he sweated in his harness, and trembled at the thought of having other questions to answer. Thus far, the summary instructions given him the night before by a Jew whose life he had saved had answered every purpose, thanks to his retentive memory, and to the Jew's perfect acquaintance with Cornelius's habits and manner of life. But the young gentleman, who, in the first enthusiasm of his idea, had feared nothing, began to realize all the difficulties of his undertaking. The terrible Fleming's gravity and self-possession

had their effect upon him. Then, too, he felt that he was behind bolts and bars, and he had a vision of all the grand provost's halters at the service of Master Cornelius.

"Have you supped?" the silversmith asked him, in a tone that said plainly: "Do not sup!"

Notwithstanding her brother's tone, the old maid started and glanced at their young guest, as if to gauge the capacity of that stomach which it might be necessary to satisfy; then she said, with a false smile:

"You didn't steal your name; your hair and moustache are blacker than the devil's tail!"

"I have supped," he replied.

"Very well," rejoined the miser, "you may come to see me again to-morrow. I have long been accustomed to do without an apprentice. However, the night will bring me counsel."

"But, by Saint Bavon! monsieur, I am a Fleming, I know nobody here, the chains are stretched in the streets, I shall be put in prison.—However," he added, alarmed by the eagerness with which he had spoken, "if you prefer, I will go."

The oath had an extraordinary effect on the Fleming.

"No, no, by Saint Bavon, you shall sleep here."

"But—" the sister began in dismay.

"Hold your tongue," said Cornelius. "Oosterlinck in his letter answers for this youth.—Haven't we a hundred thousand francs of Oosterlinck's?" he added, putting his mouth to his sister's ear. "That's good security!"

"But suppose he should steal the Bavarian jewels? I tell you he looks much more like a thief than a Fleming!"

"Hush!" said the old man, pricking up his ears.

The two misers listened. A moment after the "Hush!" they heard the sound of several men walking in the distance, on the other side of the moat.

"It's the Plessis patrol," said the old woman.

"Come, give me the key to the apprentice's room," rejoined Cornelius.

The old woman started to take the lamp.

"Are you going to leave us alone here without a light?" cried Cornelius in a meaning tone. "Aren't you old enough yet to get along without seeing? Is it such a very difficult matter to find that key?"

The old woman understood the hidden meaning of those words, and left the room. Looking after that strange creature as she walked to the door, Philippe Goulenoire was able to snatch a hasty glance about the room, unseen by his master. It was wainscoted in oak to the height of a man's waist, and the walls were hung with yellow leather ornamented with black arabesques; but the object that most impressed him was a matchlock pistol provided with a dagger worked by a spring. That novel and formidable weapon was at Cornelius's hand.

"How do you expect to earn your living?" the usurer inquired.

"I have very little money," Goulenoire replied, "but I know some good tricks. If you will give me a sou for every mark I help you to gain, I shall be content."

"A sou! a sou!" echoed the miser, "that's a great deal of money."

Thereupon the old sibyl returned.

"Come," said Cornelius to Philippe.

They went out into the vestibule and ascended a spiral staircase whose round cage was in a high turret beside the living-room. On the first floor the young man stopped.

"Nay, nay," said Cornelius. "Deuce take me! this is where the king takes his diversion."

The architect had arranged the lodging allotted to the apprentice under the pointed roof of the turret in which the spiral staircase was located. That lodging consisted of a small, round chamber, wholly of stone, cold and without any ornament. The turret was in the centre of the façade on the courtyard, which, like all provincial courtyards, was small and dark. At the farther end, through divers arches with iron gratings, could be seen a wretched garden containing nothing but mulberry-trees, which Cornelius undoubtedly tended. The young gentleman noticed all this through the windows on the staircase, with the aid of the moon, which luckily was shining brightly. A cot, a stool, a jug, and a rickety chest composed the furniture of this species of box. Light was admitted through small square apertures, cut at regular intervals around the outer

side of the turret, where they probably formed a part of its exterior decorations, as is usually the case in that graceful style of architecture.

"Here is your room; it is simple and secure, and contains everything that you need to sleep. Good-night! Do not go from it as the others have done."

Having bestowed upon his apprentice a last glance pregnant with many thoughts, Cornelius double-locked the door, removed the key, and descended the stairs, leaving the young man as crestfallen as a bell-founder who finds nothing in his mould. Alone, without a light, seated on a stool in that little garret from which his four predecessors had emerged only to go to the scaffold, the gentleman felt like a wild beast caught in a trap. He jumped upon the stool and stood on tiptoe to reach the small openings through which came rays of white light. He saw the Loire, the lovely hills of Saint-Cyr, and the dark splendors of Plessis, where two or three lights were shining in as many recessed windows; in the distance lay the fair fields of Touraine and the silvery expanse of its river. The slightest details of that attractive landscape took on an unfamiliar charm: the windows, the waters, the tops of the houses, gleamed like jewels in the trembling rays of the moon. The young nobleman's heart could not ward off a sweet and melancholy emotion.

"Suppose it were a farewell!" he said to himself.

He stood there, already experiencing the intense emotions that his adventure had promised him, and giving way to all the apprehensions of the prisoner

who still retains a gleam of hope. His mistress's charms increased with every obstacle. She was no longer a woman in his eyes, but a supernatural being vaguely seen through the flames of desire. A faint cry, which, as he thought, came from the Hôtel de Poitiers, brought him back to himself and his real position. As he lay down upon his wretched pallet to reflect upon the affair, he heard a faint rustling on the spiral staircase; he listened very intently and heard the words: "He is lying down!" in the old woman's voice. By a peculiar chance, not detected by the architect, the slightest sound on the stairs echoed in the apprentice's room, so that the pretended Goulenoire did not lose a single movement made by the miser and his sister, who were watching him. He undressed, went to bed, feigned sleep, and employed the time during which his hosts remained at their post of observation on the stairs in trying to invent a method of going from his prison to the Hôtel de Poitiers.

About ten o'clock, Cornelius and his sister, convinced that their apprentice was asleep, withdrew to their own quarters. The young gentleman listened attentively to the heavy receding footsteps of the two Flemings, and believed that he was able to locate their apartments: they evidently occupied the whole of the second floor. As in all the houses of that period, that floor was under the eaves, its windows projecting above the roof with pediments embellished with handsome carving. The roof was surrounded by a sort of balustrade which concealed

the gutters whose function it was to guide the rain-water to spouts representing a crocodile's jaws, which emptied it into the street. The young gentleman, who had studied that roof topography as carefully as a cat would have done, expected to find a way from the turret to the roof, and to be able to reach Madame de Saint-Vallier's apartments with the aid of a gutter; but he did not know that the windows in the turret were so small; it was impossible to pass through them. He determined, therefore, to go out upon the roof through the window on the spiral staircase which lighted the second-floor landing. In order to accomplish that rash project, he must get out of his room, and Cornelius had taken the key. As a matter of precaution, the young man had provided himself with one of those daggers with which the finishing-blow used to be dealt in duels, when your adversary implored you to end his suffering. That formidable weapon had a blade which was ground down to a razor edge on one side, and toothed like a saw on the other, but the teeth ran in the opposite direction to that of the steel as it entered the body. The young nobleman hoped to be able to saw the wood around the lock with the dagger. But, luckily for him, the socket in which the lock worked was fastened on the inside by four large screws. With the assistance of the dagger, he succeeded, not without great difficulty, in unscrewing the lock which kept him in durance, and carefully placed the screws upon the chest. About midnight he was free, and he went down without shoes, in order to see how the land

lay. He was more than a little astonished to see wide open the door of a corridor which gave access to several rooms, and at the end of which was a window opening upon a sort of valley formed by the roofs of the Hôtel de Poitiers and of Malemaison, which came together on that side. Nothing could express his delight, unless it were the vow he made at once to the Blessed Virgin, to found a mass in her honor at the famous church of Escrignoles at Tours. Having examined the broad, high chimneys of the Hôtel de Poitiers, he retraced his steps to get his dagger; but he shuddered with terror when he spied a light which illuminated the staircase, and saw Cornelius himself in his *dalmatique*, with a lamp in his hand and his eyes wide open and fixed upon the corridor, at the end of which he appeared like a spectre.

"If I open the window and jump out on the roof, he will hear me!" said the young man to himself.

And the terrible Cornelius came on and on, as inexorably as the hour appointed for the criminal's death. In that extremity, Goulenoire, inspired by love, recovered all his presence of mind; he darted into the recess of a door, drew close into the corner, and waited for the miser to pass. When the latter, holding his lamp in front of him, was just within range of the wind the young man could produce by blowing, he blew out the light. Cornelius muttered some vague words and a Dutch oath; but he turned back. The young gentleman thereupon hurried to his room, seized his weapon, returned to the blessed

window, opened it softly, and leaped out upon the roof. Once at liberty and in the open air, he felt that his strength was giving way, he was so happy; perhaps the extreme agitation, due to the peril and the audacity of the undertaking, occasioned his emotion; victory is often as perilous as the battle itself. He sat astride a gutter, trembling and saying to himself: "Through which chimney shall I go down to her?"

He looked them all over. With the instinct born of love, he tried them all to ascertain in which one there had been a fire. When he had made up his mind, the adventurous youth fixed his dagger in the crevice between two stones, fastened his ladder to it, dropped it down the chimney, and took the risk of descending to his mistress's apartment without a tremor, trusting to his good sword. He had no idea whether Saint-Vallier would be asleep or awake, but he was resolved to hold the countess in his arms though it should cost the lives of two men! He placed his feet softly on the hot ashes; he stooped more softly still, and saw the countess sitting in an armchair. Pale with joy, with fast-beating heart, the fearful woman pointed out to him, by the lamplight, Saint-Vallier lying in bed within ten paces of her. It may be believed that their silent, burning kiss echoed only in their hearts!

*

The next morning, about nine o'clock, as Louis XI. came from his chapel after hearing mass, he found Master Cornelius in his path.

"Ah! good-morrow, gossip!" he said, abruptly, setting his cap straight.

"Sire, I would gladly pay a thousand crowns to obtain a moment's audience, in view of the fact that I have found the man who stole the chain of rubies, the jewels—"

"Let us hear about it," said Louis XI., going forth into the courtyard of Plessis, followed by his silversmith, by Coyctier his physician, by Olivier le Daim, and by the captain of the Scotch body-guard. "Tell me the story. So we shall have another man to hang for you!—Holà, Tristan!"

The grand provost, who was walking up and down the courtyard, came forward slowly, like a dog who presumes upon his fidelity. The group halted under a tree. The king took his seat upon a bench, and the courtiers stood in a semicircle before him.

"Sire, a pretended Fleming has gulled me so completely—" Cornelius began.

"He must be a very crafty fellow," said Louis XI., shaking his head.

"Indeed, yes," replied the silversmith. "But I am not sure that he would not have cozened yourself.

How could I suspect a poor devil who was recommended to me by Oosterlinck, a man who has a hundred thousand francs deposited with me! I would wager that the Jew's signature is forged. In a word, sire, this morning, I found that I had been relieved of those jewels which you admired, they were so beautiful. They were stolen from me, sire! Think of stealing the Elector of Bavaria's jewels! the varlets respect nothing. They will steal your kingdom, if you are not vigilant. I went up at once to the room allotted to this apprentice, who certainly is a past-master in thievery. This time we shall not lack proofs. He unscrewed the socket of the lock; but, when he returned, as the moon had gone down, he could not find all the screws! Luckily, I found a screw under my foot as I entered the room. He was asleep, the knave, he was tired out. Fancy, messieurs: he had gone down into my closet by the chimney. To-morrow, nay, to-night, I shall have a grating set in. One always learns something from thieves. He has a silken ladder upon him, and his clothes bear the marks of his travels on the roof and in the chimney. He proposed to remain with me and ruin me, the audacious rascal! Where has he buried the jewels? Some country people saw him returning to my house over the roofs very early. He had confederates who waited for him on the embankment you built. Ah! sire, you are the accomplice of the thieves who come in boats; and, presto! they carry everything away, without leaving a sign! But we have the leader, a bold villain, a blade who would do credit

to a gentleman's mother! Ah! he will make a fine gallows-bird, and, with a little touch of the torture, we shall learn the whole truth! Does not this concern the glory of your reign? There should be no thieves under so great a king!"

The king had long since ceased to listen. He had fallen into one of those gloomy reveries which became so frequent during the last years of his life. Profound silence ensued.

"This is your business, gossip," he said, at last, to Tristan; "go and attend to this affair."

He rose, walked forward a few steps, and his courtiers left him alone. His eyes fell upon Cornelius, who had mounted his mule and was riding away with the grand provost.

"How about the thousand crowns?" said he.

"Ah! sire, you are too great a king! there is not money enough in the world to pay for your justice."

Louis XI. smiled. The courtiers envied the frank speech and the privileges of the old silversmith, who speedily disappeared in the avenue of mulberry-trees between Plessis and Tours.

The young gentleman, thoroughly exhausted, was in truth sleeping soundly. On returning from his gallant expedition, he no longer felt, to defend himself against remote or imaginary dangers in which, perhaps, he no longer believed, the same ardor and courage with which he had rushed to grasp perilous pleasures. So he had postponed until the following day the task of cleansing his soiled garments, and of removing every vestige of his good fortune. It was

a great mistake, but everything seemed to conspire to make it inevitable. When, being deprived of the rays of the moon, which had set during his fête of love, he failed to find all the screws, he lost patience. With the recklessness of a man whose heart was overflowing with joy, or hungry for repose, he trusted his good luck, which had served him so well thus far. He made a sort of compact with himself, by the terms of which he was to wake at daybreak; but the events of the day and the emotions of the night did not permit him to keep faith with himself. Happiness is forgetful. Cornelius did not seem so formidable to the young nobleman when he lay down upon the hard bed from which so many poor fellows had risen only to go to execution, and that recklessness was his ruin.

While the king's silversmith was returning from Plessis-lez-Tours, accompanied by the grand provost and his redoubtable archers, the false Goulenoire was watched by the old sister, who sat upon the steps of the spiral staircase, heedless of the cold, knitting stockings for Cornelius.

The young gentleman continued to enjoy the pleasures of that delightful night, unconscious of the catastrophe that was hastening toward him at a gallop. He was dreaming. His dreams, like all youthful dreams, were so vivid, that he did not know where reality ceased and illusion began. He dreamed that he was on a cushion at the countess's feet; with his head upon her knees, which trembled with love, he listened to the tale of the persecution

and tyranny to which the count had hitherto subjected his wife; he wept over it with the countess, who was the dearest to Louis XI. of all his natural daughters; he promised to go to that terrible father the next day, and tell him the whole story; they arranged events to suit themselves, annulling the marriage and poisoning the husband, at a moment when they might fall victims to his sword if they should make the slightest sound, which would awaken him. But, in his dream, the light of the lamp, the flames that shot from their eyes, the colors of the hangings and furniture were more vivid; a more penetrating odor exhaled from their night garments, there was more love in the air, more fire about them than in the real scene. In like manner, the Marie of his dream resisted him much less forcibly than the real Marie with the languorous glances, the soft pleading, the magic questions, the cunning silences, the voluptuous solicitations, the false favors, which make the first moments of passion so immeasurably ardent, and impart a new intoxication to the heart at each step forward in love. In accordance with the amorous jurisprudence of that epoch, Marie de Saint-Vallier granted her lover only the superficial privileges of the suitor. She freely allowed him to kiss her feet, her dress, her hands, her neck; she avowed her love, she accepted her lover's devotion and his life, she would allow him to die for her, she abandoned herself to a delirium which that semi-chastity, harsh as it was and often cruel, increased beyond measure; but she was inexorable, and made

her deliverance the price of the supreme rewards of love.

In those days, in order to dissolve a marriage it was necessary to go to Rome, to have several cardinals at one's service, and to appear before the sovereign pontiff armed with the king's sanction. Marie wished to owe her liberty to her love, in order to sacrifice it to her love. Almost all women in those days had sufficient power to establish their empire in a man's heart in such way as to make a passion the story of a whole life, the guiding principle of supreme resolutions! The ladies knew their worth in France, they were sovereigns there, they had a becoming pride in themselves, lovers belonged to them rather than possessed them, their love often cost much blood, and a man must run many risks in order to belong to them. But the Marie of the dream, more indulgent and touched by the devotion of her beloved, defended herself but feebly against the handsome youth's violent passion. Which was the real woman? was it she whom the false apprentice saw in his dream? had he seen a woman with a mere mask of virtue in the Hôtel de Poitiers? It is a delicate question to solve, and the honor of the ladies demands that it remains unsolved.

At the very moment when, perhaps, the Marie of the dream was about to forget her lofty dignity, the lover felt a grasp of iron on his arm, and the grand provost's soft but sneering voice said to him:

"Come, my good midnight Christian, who go

about feeling for God in the dark, suppose we wake up!"

Philippe saw Tristan's dark face and recognized his sardonic smile; then he saw Cornelius and his sister on the spiral staircase, and, behind them, the provost's guards. At that spectacle, at sight of those diabolic faces, all of which breathed hatred or the ghastly curiosity of people accustomed to executions, Philippe Goulenoire sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes.

"By God's death!" he cried, snatching his dagger from under his pillow, "it seems that this is the hour to play with knives."

"Oho!" rejoined Tristan, "there spoke the gentleman! It seems to me that I see before me Georges d'Estouteville, the nephew of the grand master of the crossbowmen."

When he heard his true name uttered by Tristan, young d'Estouteville thought less of himself than of the risk incurred by his unfortunate mistress if he were recognized.

To avoid all suspicion, he cried:

"*Ventre-Mahom!* help, vagabonds!"

With that horrible cry, uttered by a man in genuine despair, the young courtier made a tremendous leap and landed on the stairway, dagger in hand. But the grand provost's acolytes were accustomed to such affairs. When Georges d'Estouteville reached the landing, they seized him dexterously, heedless of the vigorous blow he aimed at one of them, which luckily glanced from the archer's corselet; then they

disarmed him, bound his hands, and threw him back upon the bed in front of their motionless, pensive chief.

Tristan gazed silently at the prisoner's hands, and said to Cornelius, pulling at his beard as he pointed to them:

"Those hands are no more the hands of a beggar than of an apprentice. He's a gentleman!"—*gentilhomme*.

"Say rather a *Jean-pille-homme!*" cried the usurer, sorrowfully. "Noble or serf, my good Tristan, he has ruined me, the villain! I would like right well to see his feet and hands scorched or squeezed in your pretty little boots. There is no doubt that he is the leader of that legion of devils, visible or invisible, who know all my secrets, pick my locks, rob me, and murder me. They must be very rich, my gossip! Ah! but we shall find their treasure this time, for this fellow looks to me like the King of Egypt. I shall recover my dear rubies and all my money; our excellent king will have gold pieces to throw away—"

"Oh! our hiding-places are more secure than yours!" said Georges, with a smile.

"Ah! the damned thief confesses!" cried the miser.

The grand provost was closely scrutinizing Georges d'Estouteville's clothes and the lock.

"Was it you who took out all those screws?"

Georges made no reply.

"Oh! well, keep your own counsel, if you choose.

Before long, you will confess to Saint Chevalet," retorted Tristan.

"That is something like," cried Cornelius.

"Take him away," said the provost.

Georges d'Estouteville asked permission to dress. At a sign from their chief, the archers dressed their prisoner with the skill and activity of a nurse who wishes to make the most of a moment when her little charge is quiet, to change his clothes.

Rue du Mûrier was filled with an immense crowd. The muttering of the people increased from moment to moment, and seemed the precursor of a sedition. The news of the robbery had been circulated through the city early in the morning. The apprentice, who was said to be young and comely, had awakened a sympathetic feeling everywhere, and rekindled the popular detestation of Cornelius: so that there was no son of an honest mother, no young woman with pretty pattens and a rosy face to show, who was not anxious to see the victim. When Georges came forth, in custody of one of the provost's men, who mounted his horse, having wound about his arm the stout leather thong with which he held the prisoner, whose hands were tied firmly, a terrible clamor arose. Whether to obtain a sight of Philippe Goulenoire, or to set him free, the latest comers crowded those in front of them against the picket-guard of cavalry stationed in front of Malemaison. At that moment, Cornelius, with his sister's aid, closed his door and fastened his shutters with the nervous haste caused by panic terror. Tristan, who was not

accustomed to treat the common people of those days with overmuch respect, inasmuch as they were not then sovereign, was little concerned at the prospect of an émeute.

"Forward, forward!" he said to his men.

At their leader's word, the archers urged their horses toward the end of the street. When they saw one or two of their number under the horses' feet and others thrown violently against the walls, where the breath was forced out of their bodies, the people who had flocked to the spot adopted the prudent course of returning to their homes.

"Make way for the king's officers!" cried Tristan. "What do you here? Do you want to be hanged? Go to your homes, my friends, your meat is burning on the spit!—Ho! there, my woman, your husband's breeches are torn, go back to your needle!"

Although these remarks indicate that the provost was in good humor, he put the noisiest to flight as if he had hurled the black plague at them. At the moment that the first movement took place in the crowd, Georges d'Estouteville was stupefied at the sight of his beloved Marie de Saint-Vallier standing at one of the windows in the Hôtel de Poitiers, laughing and talking with the count.—She was making sport of him, the poor devoted lover, going to his death for her! But perhaps she was laughing at those whose caps were taken off by the archers' weapons. One must needs be only twenty-three years old, and rich in illusions, must dare to believe in a woman's love, and love her with all the strength

that is in one; one must have risked one's life joyfully, on the faith of a kiss, and then have been betrayed, in order to understand the rage and hatred and despair that poured into Georges d'Estouteville's heart at sight of his smiling mistress, who bestowed a cold and indifferent glance upon him. She had evidently been there a long time, for her arms were resting upon a cushion; she was taking her ease, and her old husband seemed content. He, too, was laughing, the infernal hunchback! Tears started from the young man's eyes; but, when she saw that he was weeping, Marie de Saint-Vallier hastily threw herself back. Then Georges's tears were suddenly dried, for he caught a glimpse of the red and black feathers of the page who was devoted to him. The count did not remark the approach of that discreet servitor, who stole forward on tiptoe. When the page had whispered a few words in his mistress's ear, Marie returned to the window. She managed to elude the perpetual observation of her tyrant, and flashed upon Georges a glance in which shone the craft of a woman who deceives her Argus, the fire of love, and the joys of hope.

Had she cried out: "I am watching over you!" the words would not have said so much as that glance, laden with a thousand thoughts and eloquent of the terrors, the perils, and the pleasures of their position. It was like passing from Heaven to martyrdom, and from martyrdom back to Heaven. So the young nobleman, light of heart, and content, marched gayly to his punishment, deeming the agony of the

torture a small price to pay for the joys of his love. As Tristan was riding out of Rue du Mûrier, his people halted at sight of an officer of the Scottish body-guard riding toward them at full speed.

"What's the matter?" asked the provost.

"Nothing that concerns you," replied the officer, disdainfully. "The king sends me to the Comte and Comtesse de Saint-Vallier, to invite them to dine with him."

The grand provost had hardly reached the Plessis embankment, when the count and his wife, both mounted, she on her white mule, he on his horse, and attended by two pages, overtook the archers, in order to enter Plessis-lez-Tours in their company. The party moved slowly. Georges was on foot between two guards, one of whom still led him by his thong. Tristan, the count, and his wife naturally rode first, the criminal followed them. The youthful page mingled with the archers, questioning them, and sometimes addressing the prisoner, to whom he adroitly grasped the opportunity to say in an undertone:

"I climbed the garden-wall and brought to Plessis a letter to the king written by madame. She thought that she should die when she heard that you were accused of theft. Have courage! she will speak of you to the king."

Love had already inspired the countess with its strength and its cunning. When she laughed, her manner and her smile were due to the heroism which women display in the great crises of their lives.

Notwithstanding the strange caprice of the author of *Quentin Durward* in placing the royal château of Plessis-lez-Tours upon an eminence, we must resign ourselves to the necessity of leaving it where it was at that time, namely, in a hollow, protected on two sides by the Cher and the Loire; and on a third side by the Sainte-Anne canal, so named by Louis XI. in honor of his beloved daughter, Madame de Beaujeu. That canal, connecting the two rivers between Tours and Plessis, afforded at once a formidable fortification for the château and a valuable waterway for commerce. On the side toward Bréhémont, an extensive and fertile plain, the park was protected by a moat, the remains of which attest to this day its enormous width and depth. At a time when artillery was in its infancy, the position of Plessis, long since chosen by Louis XI. for his ordinary abode, might be considered impregnable. The château, constructed of brick and stone, was in nowise remarkable; but it was surrounded by beautiful trees; and its windows commanded the loveliest views in the world through the vistas of the park—*Plexitium*.—There was no rival edifice in the vicinity of that solitary château, which stood exactly in the centre of the little level space reserved for the king by four formidable sheets of water. If we may credit tradition, Louis XI. occupied the western wing, and from his room he could see, at a glance, the Loire, and beyond the river the pretty valley watered by the Choisille, and a part of the hills of Saint-Cyr; the windows looking on the courtyard commanded the

entrance to his fortress and the embankment by which he had connected his favorite abode with the city of Tours. The monarch's suspicious character gave probability to these conjectures. If Louis XI. had displayed in the construction of his château the architectural magnificence which François I. displayed later at Chambord, the abode of the kings of France would have been permanently established in Touraine. One needs but to see that admirable strategic position and its magically beautiful surroundings to be convinced of its superiority to the sites of all the other royal dwellings.

Louis XI., having reached the fifty-seventh year of his age, had barely three more years to live; he was already conscious of the approach of death in the blows dealt him by disease. Delivered from all his enemies; on the point of adding to France all the possessions of the Ducs de Bourgogne by a marriage between the Dauphin and Marguerite, the heiress of Bourgogne, brought about by the efforts of Desquerdes, commanding his troops in Flanders; his authority firmly established everywhere; having in contemplation most desirable improvements in his realm, he saw time slipping away from him and had only the chagrins of his age. Deceived by everybody, even by his creatures, experience had augmented his natural distrust. The desire to live became in him the egotism of a king who had made himself the incarnation of royalty to his people, and he wished to prolong his life in order to carry out vast designs. All the changes which the common

sense of the publicists and the genius of revolution have introduced in the monarchy, suggested themselves to Louis XI. The unity of taxation, the equality of all subjects before the law,—in those days the prince was the law,—were the objects of his bold enterprises. On the eve of All-Saints' Day, he had summoned a conclave of learned goldsmiths, in order to establish uniformity of weights and measures in France, as he had already established uniformity of power. Thus that far-reaching mind soared like an eagle over the whole kingdom, and Louis XI. combined with all the precautions of the king the peculiarities natural to men of great ability. At no period of his reign had that grand figure been more poetic or nobler. A most extraordinary assemblage of contrasts! vast power in a feeble body, a mind incredulous of things on earth, but most credulous in all matters of religion; a man struggling with two powers stronger than his own, the present and the future; the future, in which he feared to be subjected to torments, and which led him to make so many sacrifices to the Church; the present, that is to say, his life, in whose name he obeyed Coyctier's instructions. That king, who crushed all who came in his way, was crushed himself by remorse, and even more by disease, amid all the poesy that attaches to suspicious kings, in whom all power is summed up. It was the gigantean and always magnificent conflict of man in the most perfect development of his powers, tilting against nature.

Awaiting the hour appointed for his dinner, a repast which was served at that epoch between eleven o'clock and noon, Louis XI., just returned from a short walk, was sitting in a great upholstered easy-chair by the fireplace in his apartment. Olivier le Daim and the physician Coyctier looked at each other without speaking, and stood in a window-recess, respecting their master's slumber. The only sound that could be heard was that of the footsteps of two chamberlains in the adjoining room, Sire de Montrésor and Jean Dufou, Sire de Montbazon. Those two Touraine noblemen glanced at the captain of the Scottish guard, who was apparently asleep in his chair, as his custom was. The king seemed to be dozing. His head had fallen forward on his breast; his cap was pulled down over his forehead so that it almost entirely concealed his eyes. Crouching thus in his high chair, surmounted by a royal crown, he seemed to be doubled up like a man who had fallen asleep in the midst of some profound meditation.

At that moment, Tristan and his little procession crossed Pont Sainte-Anne, which spanned the canal about two hundred yards from the entrance to Plessis.

"Who is that?" inquired the king.

The two courtiers questioned each other with a glance of surprise.

"He is dreaming," said Coyctier, in an undertone.

"*Pasques-Dieu!*" exclaimed Louis XI., "do you

think me a fool? Somebody is crossing the bridge. To be sure, I am near the chimney, and so in a position to hear the noise more readily than you. That natural phenomenon might be utilized—"

"What a man!" said Olivier le Daim.

Louis XI. rose and went to the window from which he could see the town; thereupon he spied the grand provost.

"Aha!" he said, "here comes my little gossip with his thief.—And my little Marie de Saint-Vallier, too. I had forgotten all about that.—Olivier," he continued, addressing the barber, "go and bid Monsieur de Montbazon serve some good Bourgueil at dinner; see to it that the cook does not fail to give us lampreys: those are two things of which madame la comtesse is very fond.—May I eat lampreys?" he added, after a pause, looking at Coyctier with a troubled expression.

The retainer's only reply was to examine his master's face. Those two men were a picture in themselves.

Novelists and historians have consecrated the brown camelot coat and the breeches of the same material which Louis XI. wore. His cap, adorned with lead medallions, and his collar of the Order of Saint-Michel, are no less widely known; but no writer, no painter, has ever represented that monarch's face in his last moments: a sickly, gaunt, brown, and yellow face, in which every feature expressed cynical cunning and cold irony. In that mask there was the brow of a great man, a brow

furrowed with wrinkles and laden with lofty thoughts; and in his cheeks and upon his lips an indefinable suggestion of vulgarity and lack of refinement. At sight of certain details of that face, you would have set him down for a drunken old vine-dresser or a miserly tradesman; but above those vague resemblances and the decrepitude of a moribund old man soared the king, the man of force and of action. His eyes, a light yellow in color, seemed devoid of life; but a spark of courage and of wrath still smouldered in them, and at the slightest shock they could emit flames that would set everything on fire.

The physician was a corpulent bourgeois, dressed in black, with a florid, grasping, avaricious face, and an air of importance. Those two figures had for a frame a room wainscoted in walnut, hung with high-warp Flemish tapestry, with a ceiling of carved timbers already blackened by smoke. The furniture, the bed, all inlaid with pewter arabesques, would seem to-day more valuable than they really were at that time, when the arts were beginning to produce so many masterpieces.

"The lampreys will do you no good," replied the *physicien*.

That name, recently substituted for that of *maître myrrhe*, has been retained by doctors in England. The title was then given to doctors everywhere.

"What shall I eat?" queried the king, humbly.

"Wild duck, with salt. Otherwise you may die on All-Souls' Day, your bile is so deranged."

"To-day!" cried the king, in deadly terror.

"Oh! never fear, sire," replied Coyctier, "I am here. Try not to worry, and seek distraction."

"Ah!" said the king, "my daughter used formerly to succeed in that difficult task."

At that moment, Imbert de Bastarnay, Sire de Montrésor and Bridoré, knocked softly at the royal door. Having received permission from the king, he entered to announce the Comte and Comtesse de Saint-Vallier. Louis XI. waved his hand. Marie appeared, followed by her aged husband, who allowed her to go first.

"Good-morning, my children," said the king.

"Sire," replied the young woman, in a low tone, as she embraced him, "I would speak with you in secret."

Louis XI. pretended not to have heard. He turned to the door, and called in a hollow voice:

"Holà, Dufou!"

Dufou, Seigneur de Montbazon, and, at a later date, grand cupbearer of France, made haste to respond.

"Go to the maître d'hotel and say that I must have a wild duck to eat. Then you will go to Madame de Beaujeu, and say to her that I wish to dine alone to-day.—Do you know, madame," continued the king, pretending to be a little angry, "that you neglect me? 'Twill soon be three years since I saw you!—Ah! well, come here, my child," he added, sitting down and holding out his arms to her. "You are very thin!—Look you, why do you make her thin?" Louis XI. demanded, turning abruptly to Sieur de Poitiers.

The jealous husband cast such a frightened glance at his wife that she almost pitied him.

"It is happiness, sire," he replied.

"Ah! you love each other too dearly," said the king, holding his daughter between his knees. "Ah! I see that I was right in naming you Marie-filled-with-grace.—Leave us, Coyctier!—What do you want of me?" he said to his daughter, as the physician left the room. "To send your—"

At that perilous moment, Marie boldly put her hand over the king's mouth, whispering in his ear:

"I thought that you were always discreet and discerning."

"Saint-Vallier," said the king, with a laugh, "I believe that Bridoré has something to say to you."

The count left the room; but he made a movement of the shoulders well known to the countess, who guessed the thoughts of her jealous tormentor, and deemed it prudent to forestall his evil designs.

"Tell me, my child, how you find me? Hein! am I greatly changed?"

"Do you wish for the real truth, sire? or do you wish me to deceive you?"

"No," he said in a low voice, "I must know where I am."

"In that case, your face looks very bad to-day. But let not my frankness injure the success of my cause!"

"What is it?" said the king, frowning and passing a hand across his brow.

"This, sire," she replied: "the young man whom you have caused to be arrested at the house of Cornelius, your silversmith, and who is at this moment in the custody of your grand provost, is innocent of the theft of the Duke of Bavaria's jewels."

"How do you know that?" rejoined the king.

Marie hung her head and blushed.

"I need not ask if there is a love-affair beneath all this," said Louis XI., raising his daughter's head gently and patting her chin. "If you do not confess every morning, my love, you will go to hell."

"Can you not do what I wish without doing violence to my secret thoughts?"

"Where would be the pleasure?" cried the king, looking upon the affair as a source of entertainment.

"Ah! do you wish that your pleasure should cause me sorrow?"

"Sly one, have you no confidence in me?"

"Then, sire, order this gentleman set at liberty."

"Aha! he's a gentleman," cried the king. "So he is not an apprentice?"

"He is surely an innocent man," she replied.

"I do not so consider," said the king, coldly. "I am the grand judiciary of my kingdom, and I must punish malefactors."

"Nay, do not assume your thoughtful mien, but grant me this young man's life!"

"Would it not be giving you back your property?"

"Sire," she replied, "I am prudent and virtuous. You make sport—"

"In that case, as I cannot understand the affair at all, let us call Tristan to enlighten us."

Marie de Sassenage turned pale, she made a violent effort, and cried:

"I assure you, sire, that you will be in despair at having done it. The alleged culprit has stolen nothing. If you grant me his pardon, I will tell you everything, though you should punish me."

"Oho! this is becoming serious!" said Louis XI., removing his cap. "Speak, my child."

"Sire," she replied in an undertone, putting her lips to her father's ear, "that young gentleman remained in my room all night."

"He might very well have gone to your room and robbed Cornelius as well; that would be robbery twice over."

"Sire, I have your blood in my veins, and I am not the woman to love a vagabond. This gentleman is the nephew of the captain-general of your cross-bowmen."

"Hoity-toity!" said the king. "You are a very hard subject to confess."

With that, Louis XI. pushed his trembling daughter away, and ran to the door of his room, but on tiptoe, and without making a sound. For a moment past, he had seen, by the light from a window in the adjoining room, shining through the crack under the door, the shadow of some inquisitive person's feet projected into his room. He opened the iron-bound door suddenly, and surprised the Comte de Saint-Vallier listening.

"*Pasques-Dieu!*" he cried, "here is audacity that deserves the axe."

"Sire," replied Saint-Vallier, proudly, "I prefer a blow of the axe on my neck, to the ornament of marriage on my forehead."

"You may have both," said Louis XI. "No one among you is exempt from those two infirmities, messieurs. Withdraw to the other room.—Conyngham," he continued, addressing the captain of his guards, "are you asleep? Where is Monsieur de Bridoré? You allow me to be approached thus? *Pasques-Dieu!* the meanest bourgeois in Tours is better served than I."

Having relieved his mind thus, Louis returned to his room; but he was careful to draw the tapestry portière which formed a second door, intended not so much to exclude draughts of air as to deaden the sound of the king's words.

"And so, my daughter," he resumed, taking pleasure in playing with her as a cat plays with the mouse it has caught, "Georges d'Estouteville was your lover last night?"

"Oh! no, sire."

"No? Then, by Saint Carpion, he deserves death! The knave did not deem my daughter fair enough, perhaps!"

"Oh! is that all?" she said. "I assure you that he kissed my feet and hands with an ardor that might have moved the most virtuous of women. He loves me in all sincerity and honor."

"Do you take me for Saint Louis, pray, that you

think I will believe such idle tales? A young fellow, so well turned as he, risk his life to kiss your pattens or your sleeves! Tell that to others—"

"O sire, it is true. But he came for another purpose, too—"

As she spoke, Marie realized that she had placed her husband's life in jeopardy, for Louis XI. asked at once and quickly:

"For what purpose?"

This adventure diverted him immensely. Certainly he did not anticipate the strange disclosures his daughter made to him, after stipulating that her husband should be forgiven.

"Oho! Monsieur de Saint-Vallier, you dare shed the royal blood!" cried the king, his eyes flashing with wrath.

At that moment, the bell of Plessis rang to announce that the king was served. Leaning on his daughter's arm, with contracted brow, Louis XI. appeared in the doorway, and found all his retainers under arms. He cast an equivocal glance upon the Comte de Saint-Vallier, thinking of the judgment he was about to pronounce upon him. The profound silence that reigned was broken by the footsteps of Tristan ascending the main staircase. He entered the room, and said, walking toward the king:

"The affair is settled, sire."

"What! is it all over?" said the king.

"Our man is in the hands of the priests. He confessed the theft at last, after a moment of torture."

The countess turned pale, sighed, could not find her voice, and looked at the king. That glance was surprised by Saint-Vallier, who muttered:

"I am betrayed, the thief is known to my wife."

"Silence!" cried the king. "There is someone here who seeks to weary my patience.—Go at once and suspend this execution," he continued, addressing the grand provost. "You will answer to me for the culprit, body for body, my gossip! This matter must be more carefully looked into, and I will myself undertake it. Set the culprit free provisionally! I shall know where to find him again; these thieves have hiding-places that they love, caverns in which they slink out of sight. Inform Cornelius that I will go to his house this evening to investigate this affair myself.—Monsieur de Saint-Vallier," said the king, gazing fixedly at the count, "I have news of you. All your blood would not pay for a drop of mine, mark that! By Our Lady of Cléry! you have been guilty of *lèse-majesté*. Did I give you so dainty a maiden to make her white-faced and barren? Return to your own house at once, and make all needful preparations for a long journey."

The king paused from habitual cruelty; then he added:

"You will set out this evening to conduct my negotiations with my lords of Venice. Have no anxiety, I will bring your wife back to-night to my château of Plessis; she will surely be in safety here. Henceforth I will watch over her more sedulously than I have done since your marriage."

As she listened to those words, Marie silently pressed her father's arm, as if to thank him for his clemency and his good humor. Louis XI. meanwhile was laughing in his sleeve.

Louis was very fond of meddling in the affairs of his subjects, and he enjoyed introducing the royal majesty in scenes of bourgeois life. That taste of his, which some historians have severely reprobated, was nothing more, however, than a passion for the *incognito*, one of the greatest enjoyments of princes, a sort of momentary abdication which enables them to import a taste of the life of ordinary mortals into their existences, made tasteless by the entire absence of contrasts; but Louis XI. enjoyed *incognito* without disguise. On occasions of that sort, he was most amiable, too, and exerted himself to be agreeable to people of the third estate, whom he had made his allies against the feudal nobles. It was long since he had had an opportunity to become a man of the people, and to espouse the domestic concerns of a man involved in some troublesome affair, so that he eagerly assumed Master Cornelius's anxiety and the secret troubles of the Comtesse de Saint-Vallier. On several occasions during dinner, he said to his daughter:

"But who can have robbed my gossip? Here have been thefts of over twelve hundred thousand crowns in eight years!—Twelve hundred thousand crowns, messieurs," he repeated, looking around at the gentlemen who were waiting upon him. "By Our Lady! with that sum one might

obtain many absolutions at the court of Rome. *Pasques-Dieu!* I might have built embankments along the whole length of the Loire, or, better still, have conquered Piedmont, a magnificent bulwark ready-made for our kingdom."

*

When the dinner was at an end, Louis XI., with his daughter, his physician, and the grand provost, followed by an escort of men-at-arms, rode to the Hôtel de Poitiers, where he found, as he expected, Monsieur de Saint-Vallier awaiting his wife, perhaps in order to rid himself of her.

"Monsieur," said the king, "I bade you start as soon as possible. Say adieu to your wife and away to the frontier; you shall have an escort of honor. As for your instructions and credentials, they will be at Venice before you."

Louis XI. issued orders, to which he added some secret instructions, to a lieutenant of his Scottish guard to take a detachment and escort his ambassador to Venice. Saint-Vallier set out in great haste, after bestowing upon his wife a cold kiss which he would have liked to make fatal. When the countess had returned to her own apartments, the king went to Malemaison, eager to unravel the melancholy farce that was being played under the roof of his gossip, the usurer, and flattering himself, in his capacity of king, that he possessed sufficient power of penetration to discover the secrets of the robbers. Cornelius did not view his master's escort without apprehension.

"Are all those people to attend the ceremony?" he said in an undertone.

Louis XI. could not repress a smile at sight of the terror of the old miser and his sister.

"No, gossip," he replied, "have no fear. They will sup with us in my apartment, and we will conduct the investigation alone. I am such an excellent thief-catcher, that I will wager ten thousand crowns that I discover the man."

"Let us find him, sire, and not bet."

They went at once into the closet in which the usurer had deposited his treasures. There Louis XI., having examined first the case in which the Elector of Bavaria's jewels were kept, then the chimney down which the supposed thief must have come, easily convinced the Fleming of the absurdity of his theory, inasmuch as there was no soot in the fireplace, where, indeed, a fire was rarely kindled, and no sign of a man's passage in the flue; and, furthermore, the chimney came out at an almost inaccessible part of the roof. In fact, after two hours of investigation, conducted with the sagacity which characterized the suspicious genius of Louis XI., it was demonstrated to his satisfaction that no one could have entered his gossip's treasure-chamber. There was no trace of violence either in the mechanism of the locks, or on the iron chests in which the gold, silver, and valuable pledges deposited by wealthy borrowers were kept.

"If the thief opened that chest," said Louis XI., "why did he not take the Bavarian jewels? For what reason did he respect that pearl necklace?—An extraordinary thief!"

At that reflection, the poor usurer changed color; the king and he looked at each other for a moment.

"Very well, sire, then why did he come here at all, this thief whom you have taken under your protection, and who walks about at night?" queried Cornelius.

"If you do not guess, gossip, I order you never to know: it is one of my secrets."

"Then the devil is in my house," said the miser, piteously.

Under any other circumstances, the king would have laughed, perhaps, at that exclamation from his silversmith; but he had become thoughtful, and he cast upon Master Cornelius those soul-searching glances so characteristic of men of talent and strong will: and the Brabantine was terrified, fearing that he had offended his redoubtable master.

"Angel or devil, I will have the culprit!" exclaimed Louis XI., abruptly. "If you are robbed to-night, to-morrow I shall know by whom. Call that old harridan whom you call your sister," he added.

Cornelius almost hesitated to leave the king alone in the room where his treasures were; but he went out, vanquished by the power of the bitter smile which wandered over Louis's withered lips. Despite his apparent confidence, however, he speedily returned, followed by the old woman.

"Have you any flour?" the king asked.

"Oh! to be sure, we have laid in our supply for the winter," she replied.

"Very good, bring it here," said the king.

"Why, what are you going to do with our flour, sire?" she cried in dismay, in no way abashed by the royal majesty, resembling therein all persons who are governed by any violent passions.

"Old fool, will you obey our gracious master's commands?" cried Cornelius. "Shall not the king have flour?"

"To buy fine flour for this!" she grumbled on the stairs. "Ah! my flour!"

She returned, and said to the king:

"Sire, is it a royal idea to want to examine my flour?"

At last, she reappeared, armed with one of those canvas bags which from time immemorial have been used in Touraine to carry to and from market nuts and fruit and grain. It was half full of flour; the housekeeper opened it, and timidly showed it to the king, at whom she cast one of those swift, fierce glances by which old maids seem to endeavor to inject poison into men.

"It is worth six sous a measure," she said.

"What does it matter!" rejoined the king; "spread it on the floor. Above all, be careful to spread it evenly, as if there had been a fall of snow in the room."

The old maid did not understand. The proposition surprised her more than the end of the world would have done.

"My flour, sire! on the floor!—why—"

Master Cornelius, beginning to understand, although vaguely, the king's purpose, seized the bag

IN CORNELIUS'S TREASURE-ROOM

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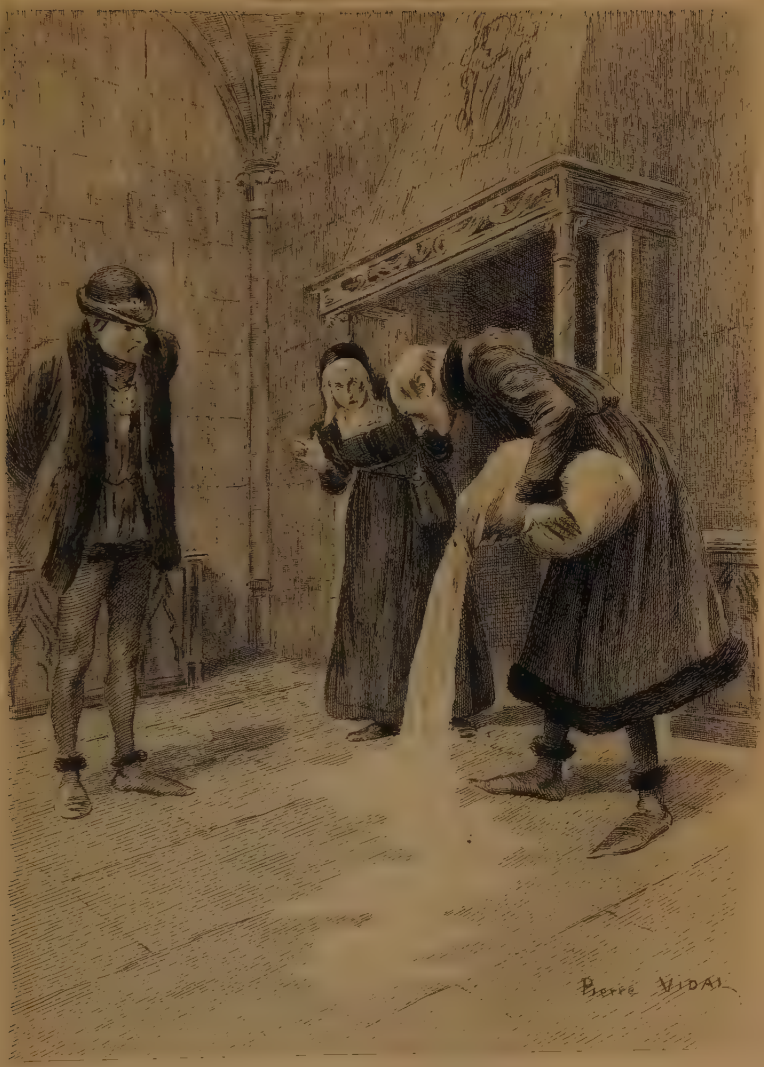
Pierre VIDAL

and emptied it gently on the floor. The old woman shuddered, but put out her hand for the bag; and when her brother restored it to her, she disappeared, heaving a deep sigh. Cornelius took a feather and began at one side of the room to spread the flour, moving backward, followed by the king, who seemed highly amused by the operation. The flour produced the effect of a sheet of snow. When they reached the door, the king said:

"Are there two keys to this lock?"

"No, sire."

Louis then examined the door, which was held in place by great iron plates and bars; all the parts of that armor centred at a lock, the key of which was kept by Cornelius. After carefully examining everything, Louis sent for Tristan and bade him station, with the greatest secrecy, some of his men-at-arms for the night in the mulberry-trees on the embankment, and on the gutters of the adjoining roofs, and to assemble his whole escort to return to Plessis, in order to let it be supposed that he would not sup with Master Cornelius; then he told the miser to close all his shutters carefully, so that no ray of light could escape, and to prepare a hasty repast, in order not to afford any ground for the supposition that he was entertaining him for the night. The king took his departure in state by the embankment, and returned secretly through the gate in the fortification to the house of his gossip the *torçonnier*. It was all so well managed that the neighbors, the people of the city, and the courtiers believed

that the king had taken a whim to return to Plessis, and was to return and sup with his silversmith the next night. Cornelius's sister confirmed that belief by purchasing green sauce from the famous maker whose shop was near the *quarroir aux herbes*, afterward called the *carroir de Beaune*, because of the magnificent white marble fountain which the unfortunate Semblançay—Jacques de Beaune—brought from Italy to adorn the capital of his native province. About eight o'clock in the evening, when the king was supping with his physician, Cornelius, and the captain of his Scottish guard, conversing gayly, forgetful of the fact that he was Louis XI., ill and almost dead, the most profound silence reigned without, and a passer-by, even a thief, would have taken Malemaison for an uninhabited house.

"I hope," said the king, with a smile, "that my gossip will be robbed to-night, so that my curiosity may be satisfied. Now, messieurs, let no one leave his room to-morrow without orders from me, under pain of some grievous penance."

Thereafter, one and all retired. The next morning, Louis XI. was the first to leave his room and bent his steps toward Cornelius's treasure-closet; but he was more than a little surprised to observe the prints of a broad foot on the stairways and corridors. Carefully avoiding those valuable indications, he went on toward the door of the closet and found it closed, without any marks of violence. He noted the direction of the footprints, but as they became gradually fainter and at last vanished entirely, it

was impossible to discover in what direction the thief had fled.

"Ah! my gossip," cried the king to Cornelius, "you have been robbed and no mistake!"

At that the old Brabantine came forth, visibly terrified. Louis took him to see the footprints on the floors; and, as he was examining them more closely, the king, happening to glance at the miser's slippers, recognized the pattern of the sole, of which so many copies were drawn on the flags. He said not a word, but repressed his desire to laugh, as he thought of all the innocent men who had been hanged. The miser went at once to his treasure. The king, having ordered him to make a fresh mark with his foot beside those that already existed, convicted him of being himself the thief.

"The pearl necklace is missing!" cried Cornelius. "There is witchcraft in this. I haven't left my room."

"We shall soon find out," said the king, who was made even more pensive than before by his silversmith's apparent good faith.

He at once summoned to his apartment the men-at-arms who had been on guard, and asked them:

"What did you see during the night?"

"Ah! sire, magic!" said the lieutenant. "Monsieur your silversmith went down the wall like a cat, and so swiftly, that we thought at first he was a ghost."

"I!" cried Cornelius, who, after that exclamation,

stood silent, like a man who had lost the use of his limbs.

"Go, you fellows," said the king to the archers, "and say to Messieurs Conyngham, Coyctier, and Bridoré, and to Tristan as well, that they may leave their rooms and come hither.—You have incurred the penalty of death," said the king, coldly, to the Brabantine, who luckily did not hear him; "you have at least ten deaths upon your conscience!"

Thereupon Louis paused, and laughed silently.

"But have no fear," he continued, noticing the extraordinary pallor of the miser's face, "you are better to bleed than to kill! And you can extricate yourself from the claws of my justice by paying a good round fine to the profit of my treasure-chest; but if you do not build at least one chapel in honor of the Virgin, you are in a fair way to find yourself involved in some serious and warm affairs for all eternity."

"Twelve hundred and thirty thousand crowns and eighty-seven thousand make thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand," said Cornelius, mechanically, engrossed in his calculations. "Thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns made away with!"

"He must have buried them somewhere," said the king, who began to look upon the sum as a regally magnificent one. That was the magnet that always attracted him here: he smelt his treasure.

At that moment, Coyctier entered. Observing

Cornelius's attitude, he watched him narrowly, while the king narrated the adventure.

"Sire," replied the physician, "there is nothing supernatural in this affair. Our usurer has the habit of walking in his sleep. His is the third case I have seen of that strange disease. If you chose to give yourself the pleasure of witnessing its effects, you might see this old man walk without danger on the edge of roofs on the occasion of his next attack. I have noticed, in the two cases I have heretofore observed, a curious connection between the acts of this nocturnal life and the business or occupations of daily life."

"Ah! Master Coyctier, what a learned fellow you are!"

"Am I not your physician?" said Coyctier, insolently.

At that retort, Louis XI. made the gesture which he was accustomed to make when he fell in with a good idea, and which consisted in nervously straightening his cap.

"In these cases," continued Coyctier, "men attend to their business while they are asleep. As this man is not averse to hoarding money, he has simply followed his most cherished habit. In like manner, his attacks have probably come whenever he has conceived fears for his treasure during the day."

"*Pasques-Dieu!* what a treasure!" cried the king.

"Where is it?" demanded Cornelius, who, by virtue of a strange faculty of our nature, heard the

remarks of the physician and the king, although he was almost dazed by his thoughts and his misfortune.

"Ah!" rejoined Coyctier, with a hoarse, diabolical laugh, "sleep-walkers have no recollections of their acts or movements when they wake."

"Leave us," said the king.

When Louis was alone with his gossip, he looked at him with a cold, sneering laugh.

"Messire Hoogworst," he said, with a bow, "in France all buried treasure belongs to the king."

"True, sire, everything is yours, and you are the absolute master of our lives and our fortunes; but thus far you have been so gracious as to take only what you actually require."

"Listen, my friend; if I assist you to find this treasure, you may boldly and without fear divide it with me!"

"No, sire, I do not choose to divide it with you, but to give it all to you after my death. But what is your plan?"

"I shall need only to keep watch on you in your nocturnal excursions. We should have reason to fear any other than myself."

"Ah! sire," exclaimed Cornelius, throwing himself at Louis's feet, "you are the only man in the kingdom whom I should be willing to trust to perform that service, and I shall find a way to prove my gratitude for your gracious kindness to your servant, by moving heaven and earth to bring about the marriage of the heiress of Bourgogne to Monseigneur. There will be a noble treasure, no paltry

gold pieces, but fair domains which will round out your realm."

"Fie, fie, Fleming, you deceive me!" said the king, with a frown, "or else you have served me ill."

"What, sire, can you doubt my devotion, you, the only man I love?"

"Mere words," retorted the king, gazing fixedly at the Brabantine. "You should not wait for this opportunity to make yourself useful to me. *Pasques-Dieu!* you presume to sell me, Louis the Eleventh, your protection! Are you the master, pray, and am I the slave?"

"Ah! sire," replied the old usurer, "I hoped to afford you a pleasant surprise by the information of the league I have negotiated for you with the people of Ghent; and I expected to receive confirmation of the news by Oosterlinck's apprentice. But what has become of him?"

"Enough!" said the king. "Another insult. I like not that others should meddle in my affairs, unknown to me. Enough! I would reflect upon all this."

Master Cornelius, with all the agility of youth, hastened down to the lower room, where his sister was.

"Ah! Jeanne, my dear heart, we have a hiding-place here in which I have put thirteen hundred thousand crowns! And it is I, I myself, who am the thief!"

Jeanne Hoogworst sprang from the stool to her

feet, as if the seat that she left were of red-hot iron. The shock was so violent to an old maid, who had been accustomed for many years to enfeeble herself by voluntary fasting, that she trembled in every limb, and felt a horrible pain in her back. The color gradually faded from her cheeks, and her face, whose changes of expression were so difficult to decipher through the wrinkles, betrayed the most profound agitation while her brother explained to her the disease of which he was the victim, and the strange position in which they both stood.

"Louis XI. and I," he said, in conclusion, "have been lying to each other like two peddlers. You understand, my child, that, if he should follow me, he would have the secret of the treasure all to himself. The king is the only person on earth who has the right to spy upon my nocturnal expeditions. I do not know if the king's conscience, near as he is to death, could resist thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns. We must forestall him, take the blackbirds from their nest, send all our treasure to Ghent; and you alone—"

Cornelius paused abruptly as if he were weighing the heart of that monarch, who dreamed of parricide at twenty-two. When the silversmith had come to a decision concerning Louis XI., he suddenly rose, like a man in haste to avoid a pressing danger. At that movement on his part, his sister, too weak or too strong for such a crisis, fell headlong to the floor; she was dead.—Master Cornelius seized her and shook her violently, saying:

"This is no time to die. You will have plenty of time for that hereafter.—Ah! it's all over. The old harridan never did do anything at the right time!"

He closed her eyes, and laid her on the floor; then all the noble and kindly sentiments that were buried in the depths of his being came to the surface, and, half-forgetful of his unsuspected treasure, he cried, piteously:

"So I have lost you, my poor old comrade, who understood me so well! Ah! you were a genuine treasure. There is the treasure. With you my peace of mind and my affection take flight. If you had known what profit there would have been in living only two nights more, you would have lived, simply to please me, poor dear!—Ho! Jeanne, thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns! Ah! if that doesn't wake you—No—she is dead!"

Thereupon he said no more, but sat down, while two great tears started from his eyes and rolled down his hollow cheeks; then, muttering "Ah! ah!" he locked the door of the room where his sister lay, and went back to the king. Louis XI. was struck by the grief depicted upon his old friend's tear-stained features.

"What is this?" he asked.

"Ah! sire, misfortunes never come singly. My sister is dead. She has gone thither before me," said Cornelius, pointing to the floor, with a ghastly expression.

"Enough!" cried Louis, who was not fond of hearing death mentioned.

"I make you my heir.—I care for nothing now. Here are my keys. Hang me, if it be your good pleasure, take everything, search the house, it is full of gold. I give you everything."

"Nay, nay, gossip," rejoined Louis XI., who was touched in a measure by the spectacle of that strange grief, "we will find the treasure again some fine night, and the sight of such great wealth will give life renewed zest for you. I will come again this week."

"Whenever it is your pleasure, sire!"

At that response, Louis, who had taken two or three steps toward the door of his room, turned sharply around. The two men gazed at each other with an expression which neither brush nor words could reproduce.

"Adieu, my gossip!" said Louis XI., in an abrupt tone, straightening his cap.

"May God and the Virgin continue to bestow their goodwill upon you!" replied the *torçonnier*, humbly, escorting the king to the door.

After so many years of friendly intercourse, those two men found a barrier erected between them by distrust and by money, although they had always had a perfect understanding in the matter of distrust and of money; but they knew each other so well, they were so accustomed to each other, that the king could not fail to detect, in the tone in which Cornelius uttered the imprudent *Whenever it is your pleasure, sire!* his repugnance to the proposed visit, just as the silversmith recognized a declaration of

war in the king's *Adieu, my gossip!* Thus Louis XI. and his usurer parted, sorely embarrassed as to their future relations to each other. The monarch possessed the Brabantine's secret, to be sure; but the latter was able, through his connections, to ensure the success of the fairest conquest that had ever fallen to the lot of a king of France,—the conquest of the domains of the house of Bourgogne, which, at that time, aroused the longing of all the sovereigns of Europe. The marriage of the illustrious Marguerite was in the hands of the people of Ghent and the Flemings, who surrounded her. Cornelius's gold and influence might be of very great assistance in the negotiations undertaken by Desquerdes, the general to whom Louis XI. had entrusted the command of the army encamped on the Belgian frontier. Thus those two old foxes were like two duellists, whose powers had been neutralized by chance. It may have been because the king's health failed rapidly after that morning, or because Cornelius had contributed to bring about the coming to France of Marguerite de Bourgogne, who arrived at Amboise in July, 1438, in order to marry the Dauphin, to whom she was affianced in the chapel of the château—at all events, the king imposed no fine upon his silversmith, nor did any open rupture take place, but they remained upon terms of armed friendship. Luckily for the usurer, it was currently reported at Tours that his sister was the author of the thefts, and that she had been put to death secretly by Tristan. If the truth had been known,

the whole city would have risen to destroy Malemaison before it would have been possible for the king to take measures for its defence.

But, if all these historical presumptions have some foundation in the inaction of Louis XI., the same cannot be said of Master Cornelius Hoogworst. The *torçonnier* passed the first days subsequent to that fatal morning in unremitting activity. Like a carnivorous animal confined in a cage, he went to and fro, seeking the scent of gold in every corner of his house; he investigated every crevice, he examined the walls, he called upon the trees of the garden, the foundations and roofs of the turrets, upon earth and sky, to give up his treasure. He would often stand in one position for hours, gazing at everything in turn, then fixing his eyes upon vacancy. Seeking the miracles of ecstasy and the power of sorcerers, he tried to discover his wealth through space and through obstacles. He was constantly absorbed in depressing thoughts, devoured by a longing which burned his entrails, but tortured even more agonizingly by the increasing violence of the duel he fought with himself since his passion for gold had turned against itself: a sort of incomplete suicide which included all the pangs of life and those of death. Never did vice impose such firm bonds upon itself; for the miser, who imprudently locks himself into the underground dungeon where he keeps his gold, has, at least, like Sardanapalus, the pleasure of dying amid his gold; but Cornelius, robber and robbed at once, and being in the secret

of neither, possessed, yet did not possess, his treasures: a novel, abnormal species of torture, but always terrible. Sometimes, becoming almost oblivious to his plight, he allowed the little wickets in his gate to remain open, and then the passers-by could see that man, already withered, standing in the centre of his uncultivated garden, absolutely motionless, and bestowing upon those who watched him a fixed stare, whose insupportable brilliancy turned them cold with fright. If, perchance, he walked through the streets of Tours, you would have taken him for a stranger: he did not know where he was, or whether the sun or moon was shining. He frequently asked his way from people whom he met, fancying that he was at Ghent, and seemed to be always in quest of his lost property. The most active and most thoroughly materialized of all human ideas, the idea by which man conceives an image of himself by creating outside of himself that entirely fictitious being called *property*, that mental demon buried his sharp claws in his heart at every instant. And then, amid that torture, fear reared its head, with all the sentiments which follow in its train. In fact, two men knew his secret, that secret which he did not know himself. Either Louis XI. or Coyctier might station men to watch his movements during his sleep and to discover the unknown hiding-place into which he had dropped his wealth amid the blood of so many innocent men: for remorse also was on guard beside his fears. In order not to allow his lost treasure to be carried off in his lifetime, he took

the most extraordinary precautions against sleep during the days immediately following his catastrophe, and his business connections enabled him to procure the most powerful antinarcotics. His long nights of watching must have been terrible: he was alone, in a hand-to-hand conflict with darkness, silence, remorse, fear, with all the thoughts which man, instinctively perhaps, has most completely personified, thus obeying a moral truth still unprovided with visible proofs.

At last, that man of powerful will, that heart hardened by political and business life, that genius unknown to history, was forced to bend the knee to the horrors of the torture he had inflicted upon himself. Driven frantic by some thought more agonizing than all those he had hitherto resisted, he cut his throat with a razor. His death was almost coincident with that of Louis XI., so that Malemaison was despoiled by the populace. Some ancient inhabitants of the province of Touraine have asserted that a farmer of the king's revenues, named Bohier, found the usurer's treasure, and made use of it to begin the construction of Chenonceaux, a château of marvellous beauty which, notwithstanding the wealth of several kings, and the taste of Diane de Poitiers and her rival Catherine de' Medici, for fine buildings, is still unfinished.

5 Luckily for Marie de Sassenage, the Sire de Saint-Vallier died, as is well known, during his mission to Venice. The family did not die out. The countess, after the count's departure, had a son who made a

name for himself in the history of France, under King François I. He was rescued by his daughter, the celebrated Diane de Poitiers, the illegitimate great-granddaughter of Louis XI., who became the illegitimate wife, the beloved mistress, of Henri II.; for love and natural progeny were hereditary in that noble family!

Château of Saché, November and December 1831.

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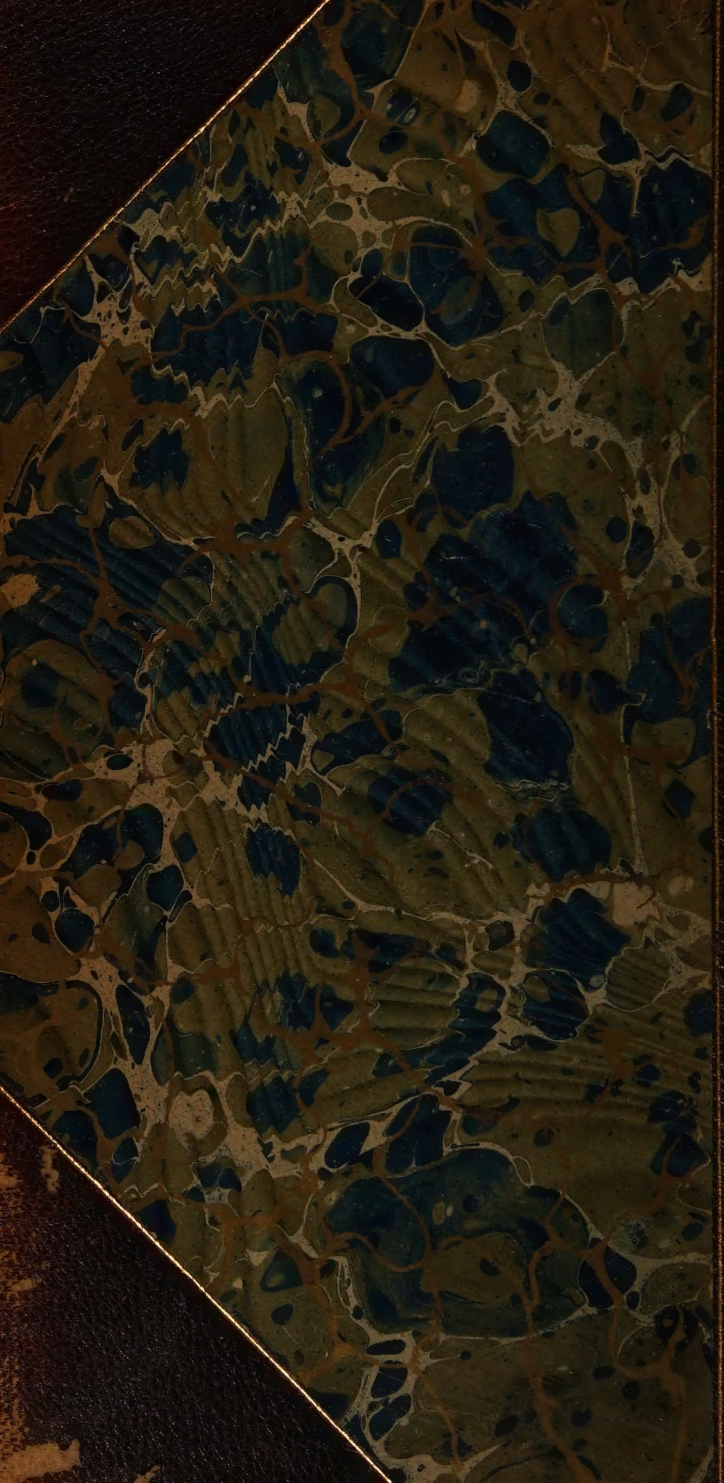
43 C. H., U. M., etc., C.